THE PROPHETIC MOVEMENT IN ISRAEL

ALBERT C. KNUDSON

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Servant Passages in "Isaiah."

42:1-4

49:1-6

50:4-9

52:13 to 53:12

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THE PROPHETIC MOVEMENT IN ISRAEL

THE DOCTRINE OF GOD

THE PHILOSOPHY OF PERSONALISM

PRESENT TENDENCIES IN RELIGIOUS THOUGHT

THE RELIGIOUS TEACHING OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

BEACON LIGHTS OF PROPHECY

The Prophetic Movement in Israel

ALBERT C. KNUDSON

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UNION THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

CONCERNING THIS TEXTBOOK

The Prophetic Movement in Israel is one of a group of textbooks intended primarily for the use of training classes of teachers or prospective teachers. While it will probably find its largest use as a textbook in training for leadership and teaching, it is believed that it will be found to be an admirable course for Sunday-school classes of young people and adults who desire a more systematic study of parts of the Old Testament than is afforded by the Improved Uniform Lessons. In common with other training textbooks this book will also be found to meet the needs of some college classes. The plan of the book is clear and simple. In style it is readable and inspiring.

The first five chapters present a brief summary of the history of the prophetic movement in Old Testament times. Following an introductory study of prophecy as an institution, and the distinctive characteristics of the prophets as compared with wise men and priests, the author in successive studies introduces the student to the pre-literary prophets, the prophets of the eighth century, those of the Babylonian period and finally the postexilic prophets. The

chief characteristics of the life and work of the outstanding men composing each of these groups are set forth together with the conditions under which each individual prophet and group contributed to the life and religion of the Hebrew people.

Chapters VI to X set forth in systematic form the relation of prophecy to the nation and its contribution to religious ideas and ideals. It is in this part of the book that the author makes a unique and significant contribution to the literature dealing with prophecy and the prophets. Chapter VI deals with the prophetic attitude toward the nation and the prophetic teaching concerning it. Chapter VII, on Prophecy and Morality, sets forth the great service of the prophets in moralizing the religion of Israel, and in establishing forever the righteous character of Jehovah and his inexorable demand for righteousness in his people. Next the author points out how prophecy, concerned primarily with the nation and its mission, came to develop a doctrine of the inner life, also setting forth the essential elements in that doctrine. Chapter IX describes the contribution of the prophets to the development of a world religion. The final chapter is concerned with prophecy and the future, particularly the Messianic hope, the judgment, and the Messiah.

There are few more important aspects of religious life and belief than those with which this book deals.

It would be impossible for the religious teacher to study the book carefully without a clarification of ideas concerning many of the fundamentals of the Christian faith. Because of its necessary limitations as a brief course it is unavoidably incomplete. The author expressly states that he is obliged to leave untouched wide areas of prophetic thought and influence. Notwithstanding this limitation, the student is certain to gain a truer conception of prophecy as a whole, and a clearer understanding of the service of the prophets both to their own day and to all time.

Most of our study of the Old Testament in the Sunday school has concerned itself with particular messages of individual prophets without relation to prophecy as an institution or to the mission of the prophets as they themselves conceived it. This study is of an entirely different kind. It is concerned with the prophetic movement as a unity and with the part of the prophets as a class in a development of that body of ideals and beliefs which is our inheritance as Christians from the Old Testament.

CHAPTER I

PROPHECY AS AN INSTITUTION

PROPHECY was a recognized institution in Israel. It was not simply an office to which a few persons were called; it was an established order, somewhat akin to that of the priesthood. The priests, prophets, and "wise men" formed in a sense the three learned professions of the ancient Hebrews. To them the people went for instruction and guidance both in public and private affairs (Jer. 18. 18; Ezek. 7. 26). All three classes also made important contributions to the literature of the Old Testament. They thus constituted the main channels through which God revealed himself to Israel. Each of these classes had its own field, and yet they stood in a certain relation to each other, so that to understand the one we need to know something about the other two. It will therefore help us in our study of the prophets and their distinctive character if a brief account is first given of the work of the "wise men" and the priests.

"Wise men."—It was the function of the "wise men" to give counsel—to point out the best course to be followed in any particular case. Their "wis-

dom" in the earlier period of Israel's history seems to have taken the form chiefly of cleverness or shrewdness (1 Kings 3. 16-28; 10. 1-10); in later times it appears for the most part as moral admonition given especially to the young (compare Prov. 1-8). Whether the representatives of this movement were in any way organized, we do not know. They are first mentioned as a distinct class in Jer. 18. 18, but they no doubt existed much earlier as a more or less clearly defined group. They were not, however, a caste, as were the priests, nor did they form an order in the same sense as did the prophets. It was not birth nor a divine call that made a person a "wise man," or sage. The one requisite for admission to the class was natural ability, developed by education and experience; and this qualification might appear in any social group, in any tribe, and in either sex. It happens, for instance, that the first "wise man" mentioned in the Old Testament was a woman (2 Sam. 14. 1-24), and so also was the second (2 Sam. 20. 16-22). In general the class was no doubt made up of those of mature age, since only they, as a rule, had the requisite experience.

The outstanding representative of the class was Solomon, but there were other sages in Israel, of even greater significance in the field of literature, whose names have not come down to us, such as the author of the book of Job. It is this book and the

book of Proverbs and that of Ecclesiastes which give us the best insight into the nature and the work of the "wise men." From these books we learn that the "wise men," at least in the period after the Exile (B. C. 538–150), were primarily concerned with the problems of the home and the individual. In the nation as such and in sacrificial worship they seem not to have taken an active interest. The problems that appealed to them were the common problems of mankind as a whole. What they sought to do was to show men, and particularly the young, the best way of getting on in the world. Honesty, they urged, is the best policy. The profounder spirits among them naturally went deeper and discussed such perplexing questions as that of the divine Providence. In dealing with these topics the "wise men" made no claim to special inspiration. They accepted as a matter of course the ethical teaching of the prophets and applied it as best they could to the concrete cases brought before them. But for themselves they laid claim to no authority other than that to which their wisdom entitled them. They were in the best sense of the term the humanists of Israel.

Priests.—The priests figured much more prominently in Old Testament history than did the "wise men." Though, like the latter, they exercised their greatest influence in the postexilic period, they were

from the time of Moses on the official representatives of the national religion and as such formed a potent factor in the life of the people. Their special province was the "law." To declare and interpret it was their primary task, as it was that of the "wise men" to give counsel. But the law among the Hebrews had a double character: it was both civil and ecclesiastical. It had to do with the administration of justice and also with the regulation of public worship. The result was that the priests had a two-fold function—one judicial and the other sacrificial. Cases were brought before them for judgment, and they rendered decision according to the divine will as revealed to them by means of the priestly oracle (Exod. 22. 9; 1 Sam. 14. 18-20, 41, 42). In this field they shared their function with the elders or civil judges. But in the field of public worship their function was exclusive. Occasionally in earlier times and under special circumstances others than priests offered sacrifices (Judg. 6. 19-27; 13. 19-23; 1 Sam. 13. 8 ff.; 14. 33-35; 2 Sam. 6. 13, 17 f.); but the later written law confined this prerogative to the priests. In earlier times also men from different tribes occasionally were consecrated priests (Judg. 17. 5). But the written law limited the priesthood to the tribe of Levi and more particularly to the house of Aaron. It was birth that thus determined one's entrance into the priestly class and also

one's station in it—whether one was to be a mere Levite, a servant of the priest, or a priest proper, or high priest.

In view of the hereditary character of their office the priests were naturally conservative. They were interested in maintaining the privileges of their own class. In view also of the external and formal character of their duties they naturally tended to lay stress upon the past, and they were no doubt sincerely convinced that the preservation of the ancient rites and customs was essential to the welfare of the community and state. Still, they were by no means immune to new influences. They gradually responded, as did the "wise men," to the higher teaching of the prophets and sought, in a measure at least, to bring their law and practice into harmony with it. But on the whole they represented the traditional and nationalistic spirit.

The distinctive character of the prophet.—As "counsel" expressed the function of the "wise man," and "law" that of the priests, so "word" was used to designate the characteristic activity of the prophet. It was the mission of the prophet to communicate to Israel the divine word. It has been commonly assumed that the prophetic word referred necessarily to the future, and prophecy has consequently been identified with prediction. At first etymology seems to support this view. The latter part of the word

"prophecy" is derived from a Greek verb meaning "to speak," and the prefix "pro" usually means "before" or "beforehand," as in such words as "procession" and "progress." A prophet, therefore, would seem to be simply a foreteller. This, however, is a mistake. The prefix "pro" in "prophet" means "instead of," as in such a word as "pronoun." Just, then, as a pronoun is a word used instead of a noun, so a prophet was one who spoke in God's stead. That this was the Hebrew conception of a prophet is evident from Exod. 7. 1, where Jehovah says to Moses that he is to be as God to Pharaoh, and Aaron his brother is to be his "prophet"—that is, his spokesman. No doubt the word of the prophet did often refer to the future, and no conception of prophecy would be adequate which omitted this factor. But the primary and distinctive element in prophecy was not prediction but mediation between God and man. What has given to Hebrew prophecy its extraordinary significance is the fact not that the prophets occasionally foretold future events, but that they revealed to men those great truths relative to the divine character and purpose which still form the basis and substance of our faith. So far as their work as a whole was concerned, they were preachers rather than predicters.

It is this fact more than anything else which distinguishes the Hebrew prophets from heathen

diviners. The latter fell into trances, had visions, and at times predicted future events. But their oracles were miscellaneous in character. They dealt for the most part with subjects of a secular and practical nature, such as the erection of houses, journeys, sicknesses, marriages, business enterprises, wars. There was in them no underlying unity of thought, no constructive religious teaching, no profound revelation of truth. They made their appeal primarily not to conscience but to curiosity. Hebrew prophecy, on the other hand, was based on definite principles. It was a rational institution. Its teaching was self-consistent, coherent, and constructive. It presented to the world—and did so for the first time—a unitary conception of things, a wonderful philosophy of life and history, which has made such a permanent and powerful appeal to the human heart and intellect as to carry with it the conviction that it came not from man but from God.

It is here also, in the fundamental and original character of their work, that the main difference between the prophets, on the one hand, and the priests and "wise men," on the other, is to be found. The priests and "wise men," when left to themselves, were as a rule traditionalists. They handed on the coin of the past; they did not mint new and significant ideas. Only as they responded to the creative thought of the prophets did they throw off their

lethargy and refashion their inherited material. What is most important and permanent in their work was thus due to the inspiration of the prophets. It was the prophets who were the pioneers in God's progressive revelation of himself in Israel. It was they who, by the heave of their genius, time and again lifted the deadweight of tradition from off the shoulders of the nation and pushed the people on toward God. Without them life would have become stagnant and religion congealed into custom. It was they who broke up the icy surface of social and religious formalism and kept the stream of spiritual life flowing on to a larger and fuller day. To them we owe what is greatest and best in the Old Testament. The other writers—priests, "wise men," and psalmists—simply reflect the light of prophetic inspiration.

A further point to be noted with reference to prophecy is the fact that it was primarily social or national in character. The "wise man," as we have seen, was interested chiefly in the individual. The priest had to do for the most part with ecclesiastical matters—with what we may call the church. The prophet, however, fixed his attention upon the nation. In ecclesiastical matters as such he had no interest, and the individual he apparently subordinated to the social group. At any rate, what he aimed at was not the conversion of individual souls

so much as the transformation of society. He looked forward to a redeemed nation—a kingdom of God. This fact is one of special significance in view of the marked social interest of our own time. It connects the prophetic message with the peculiar needs of our own day and gives to it a great practical as well as historical importance.

It should also be added in this connection that it was not birth, as in the case of the priest, nor natural ability, as in the case of the "wise man," but a divine call that led to a person's induction into the prophetic office. Whenever and wherever the Spirit of God spoke to a man and gave him a message, there went with it the authority to assume the prophetic role. The prophetic order thus stood open to all. No human limitation was placed upon admission to it. And the question whether or not a person had actually received a divine call rested at the outset wholly with the man himself. The public later had certain tests it could apply, such as the character of a prophet's message and the fulfillment of his word. But these tests were often difficult of application; and individuals were no doubt not infrequently mistaken as to their own call. The result was that it was often an open question whether a man was a true prophet or not. The final decision could only be rendered by history.

Rank and file of the prophetic order.—Thus far

we have spoken of the entire prophetic movement as if it were a unit. But this was not the case. There were in it different elements or groups, three of which at least need to be distinguished: first, the rank and file of the party; second, the preliterary prophets; and, third, the literary prophets. The first of these represents more particularly the institutional side of the movement and hence may properly be taken up here for consideration. The last two, which have to do mainly with individual prophets, will be dealt with at some length in the next four chapters.

In a direct way the rank and file of the prophetic party made no important contribution to religious thought. They even embodied at times the spirit of reaction. But they nevertheless played a considerable part in the religious life of the people and, furthermore, furnished the soil out of which sprang the great prophetic individualities. The work of an Amos, Isaiah, or Jeremiah would have been impossible but for the tradition and psychological atmosphere created by the nameless prophets who served in the ranks. The earliest references we have to these prophets are in the time of Samuel in the eleventh century B. C. They appear also in the time of Nehemiah (6. 10-14) in the fifth century B. C. and probably had a continuous existence during the intervening centuries, so that they were active

throughout the larger part at least of Old Testament history.

In 1 Sam. 10. 5-13 we read of a band of prophets moving apparently about the country, carrying musical instruments with them, and devoting themselves to an extravagant type of religious life. In 1 Sam. 19. 18-24 there is also reference to a similar company, and it is not improbable that such prophetic bands were a characteristic phenomenon of the time. What led to their appearance we do not know. As good a suggestion as any is that it was due to the intense feeling created by the subjection of the Israelites to the Philistines and the growing desire for independence. This feeling took a religious turn and resulted in the formation of bands of "inspired" men, who went through the country with the more or less definite purpose of stirring the people up to the point where they would be willing to make whatever sacrifice was necessary in order to throw off the yoke of the hated enemy. The prophetic movement was thus at the outset patriotic as well as religious. The excited demeanor to which it gave rise was evidently a striking characteristic of it, so much so that the verb "prophesy" came to be used in the sense of "rave" (1 Sam. 18. 10). This characteristic may have caused the movement to be held in more or less of social disesteem, a situation that perhaps was reflected in the current proverb "Is Saul also among

the prophets?" But whatever may have been their social status, and however crude their ideas of inspiration, these prophetic bands were possessed of an intense and consuming loyalty to their God and country—a loyalty that alone made possible the independence of the people and the establishment of the monarchy.

After the time of Samuel it was two centuries before the prophetic bands came again into prominence. What then stirred them to special activity, we do not know. It may have been the Syrian wars of the ninth century. They now appear in rather close connection with Elijah and Elisha and form apparently a quite numerous body. We read of four hundred in one instance (1 Kings 22. 6) and of a hundred in another (1 Kings 18. 13). They were at this time located in various places throughout the land, having become settled colonies. They were spoken of as "sons of the prophets," which simply meant that they formed guilds, or brotherhoods. They lived together in semimonastic fashion, having their meals in common. Marriage, however, was not forbidden (2 Kings 4. 1-7, 38-41). To some extent they no doubt supported themselves, but in large part they seem to have been dependent on the gifts of others (1 Kings 14. 3; 2 Kings 5. 15; 8. 9 ff.; Mic. 3. 5). This must have left them with considerable leisure time, which they probably employed,

as did the Christian monks, in cultivating music and literature. Some portions of our Old Testament almost certainly came from these circles.

False prophets.—Communities living under such conditions were inevitably exposed to the danger of corruption. The desire for gain would lead some of the prophets to pervert their office to selfish ends; and others, under the influence of their daily routine, would fall easily into formalism and professionalism. But even where these evils did not develop, there was danger that the prophets would be misled by their sincere and intense political or national interest. At the outset, as we have seen, prophecy was a patriotic as well as a religious movement. The two elements were fused together. But as the nation became more worldly and wicked, the two parted company, until finally it became necessary to choose between the national spirit, on the one hand, and the will of God, on the other. That this choice, however, had to be made, many of the prophets did not realize. They continued to identify the national hopes and wishes with the divine will. But this the more enlightened of their number could not do. For them the national ambition and the divine purpose stood opposed to each other, and thus there arose a cleavage in the prophetic ranks. We have a foreshadowing of this cleavage in the time of Micaiah (1 Kings *22.* 5 ff.), but not until the writing prophets of the eighth cen-

tury did it become prominent. From this time forward, however, the cleavage became a fixed division.

The nationalistic prophets were not necessarily insincere. They were rather self-deceived (Ezek. 14. 9; 1 Kings 22. 22). But the true prophets did not on that account denounce them and their message any the less severely. An ignorant conscientiousness may be quite as dangerous to a community as deliberate wickedness. Hence, in the early prophetic denunciations of the false prophets no distinction was made between those who were blinded by national zeal and those who divined for money. Both were put in the same category. Indeed, they were not always clearly distinguished from the other prophets. The prophets in general were often condemned as misleaders of the people and threatened with punishment. This fact might seem to imply that the prophetic order as a whole had become corrupt; but such would be a mistaken conclusion. There were many true prophets in the rank and file of the party—men who were ready to seal with their blood their loyalty to the truth (2 Kings 9. 7; 21. 10-16; Jer. 26. 20-23). There was thus a saving remnant in the institution, and this saving remnant must have been an important factor in making possible the work of the great prophets and in perpetuating their influence.

Topics and Questions for Discussion

Name the three classes of intellectual leaders in ancient Israel and the contributions made by each to the Old Testament. Consult, if possible, an introduction to the Old Testament such as that by McFadyen, Creelman, Gray, Moore, or Driver.

What do we learn concerning the early "wise men" from 1 Kings 3. 16-18; 10. 1-10; and 2 Sam. 14. 1-24; 20. 16-22?

The problems discussed in the book of Proverbs and the other "wisdom" books.

Who belonged to the class of "wise men," and by what authority did they speak?

The double function of the ancient Hebrew priests.

Who belonged to the priestly class, and what different grades of priests were there?

Were the priests conservative or progressive? Why?

Contrast the function of the prophet with that of the "wise man" and priest.

What do we learn from Exod. 7. 1 as to the meaning of the word "prophet"?

What was the fundamental distinction between the Hebrew prophet and the heathen diviner?

Distinguish between three different classes or groups of prophets.

What do we learn from 1 Sam. 10. 5-13 and 19. 18-24 concerning the prophetic bands in the time of Samuel?

What do we learn from 2 Kings 2-10 concerning the "sons of the prophets" in the time of Elijah and Elisha?

What special interest attaches to 1 Kings 22?

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CHAPTER II

THE PRELITERARY PROPHETS

The prophets of note who appeared before the time of Amos (B. C. 750), are commonly classed together as the "preliterary" prophets. This simply means that they did not reduce their oracles to written form, or, if they did, that these written oracles have not come down to us. It does not mean that there was no literary activity during their time; we know there was, and it is also probable, as we have already seen, that some of it was carried on in prophetic circles. But no collection of prophecies has come down to us from a date earlier than that of Amos. The prophets of that early period seem to have had no interest in handing on their utterances to subsequent generations. They were men of action, not authors, men who were apparently content with the immediate effect of their words and deeds. All that we know of them, consequently, is what is recorded in the historical books of the Old Testament, and the references to them there are for the most part brief and fragmentary.

There is some question as to exactly who should be included in the list of preliterary prophets. We

find, for instance, Abraham spoken of as a prophet (Gen. 20. 7); so also were Moses (Deut. 34. 10) and Miriam (Exod. 15. 20). And it is not to be denied that there is a certain fitness in the use of the term in these cases, especially in those of Abraham and Moses. These men were in a true and important sense mediators between God and man. But it has been customary to assign to both of them a unique place in Israelitic history, and this custom it will be well to continue. From ancient times Moses has been distinguished from the prophets, and this distinction has a basis in fact. It was Moses who laid the foundation of the national religion. Whatever preliminary work may have been done by such a man as Abraham, it is evident that its influence had largely been dissipated by the time of the exodus. The Hebrews were then disorganized both politically and religiously. They did not form a nation nor did they have a distinctive religion. It was Moses who first awakened within them a national consciousness and established among them the worship of one God. These two achievements went together and were made possible by the marvelous deliverance from Egypt. In this act the Hebrews saw the gracious intervention of Jehovah in their behalf and in response vowed unto him their undying allegiance. So passionate did this allegiance become under the leadership of Moses and so intelligent was it in its

purpose that it became the germ of the whole subsequent religious development in Israel. What the later prophets did was not to create anything altogether new; they simply put out at interest the pound they inherited from the past. It was Moses who was the creative source of Old Testament religion. He opened up the fountain from which the stream of prophecy flowed forth. He stands, therefore, apart from the other prophets. The latter it is best to regard as belonging to the period after his time.

A further question has been raised—namely, whether the preliterary prophets ought not to be called "seers" rather than "prophets." What the prophets of that time were, we know from what is recorded of the prophetic bands. They were ecstatics—men who by means of music or otherwise worked themselves up into a state of frenzy, losing self-control and even consciousness. A seer, on the other hand, was a man to whom the Deity, through vision or audition, revealed his hidden will. Such a man was held in honor in ancient Israel and was consulted by the people, as was Samuel (1 Sam. 9. 6). In this connection there is an interesting annotation in 1 Sam. 9. 9. We there read: "Beforetime in Israel, when a man went to inquire of God, thus he said, Come, and let us go to the seer; for he that is now called a Prophet was beforetime called a Seer." From this it would seem

that in the opinion of the annotator Samuel in his own day was called a seer, not a prophet. What later was a function of the prophet was earlier a function of the seer. And such a development seems actually to have taken place. The characteristics and functions of the earlier prophets or ecstatics, on the one hand, and those of the seers, on the other, were gradually fused together in the later prophet. The latter thus combined the passionate intensity of the ecstatic with the clear vision of the seer. But while the early seers are to be distinguished from the members of the prophetic bands, there is no reason why the term "prophet" should not be used of both. "Prophet" in the Old Testament is a general term, applied to a person who at other times is designated not only a "seer" but a "man of God" (1 Sam. 9. 6; 1 Kings 17. 18), a "servant" of God or of Jehovah (1 Chron. 6. 49; 1 Kings 18. 36; Isa. 20. 3), a "messenger" of Jehovah (Isa. 42. 19), an "interpreter" (Isa. 43. 27), and a "watchman" (Ezek. 3. 17). All these terms expressed the same fundamental idea—that of a mediator by speech between man and God.

Deborah.—In the post-Mosaic period the first person spoken of as a prophet or prophetess was Deborah (Judg. 4. 4.). She lived about B. C. 1100 or perhaps a little earlier. It was in the time of the Judges. Things were in an unsettled state. Anarchy

was abroad in the land, and the conflict with the Canaanites was not yet at an end. Indeed, the latter were for the time being in the ascendant. The hold of the Israelites upon the country was threatened. The day of decision was drawing near. Deborah felt it. It came to her as a breath from above. The Spirit of God was upon her. She blew the bugle blast, summoning the tribes from near and far "to the help of Jehovah, to the help of Jehovah against the mighty." The response was varied. Some shirked. Gilead abode beyond Jordan, Dan remained in his ships, Asher sat beside his creeks, and in Reuben there were great searchings of heart, but no action. Others, however, responded with alacrity to the prophetic call. Zebulun and Naphtali jeoparded their lives unto death upon the high places of the field. And the victory lay with the heroes, for theirs was a righteous cause. The very stars in their courses fought for them. A magnificent description of this conflict is given in the fifth chapter of Judges in a triumphal ode, which has been declared to be "the greatest war song of any age or nation" and has been described as "a work of genius and, therefore, a work of that highest art which is not studied and artificial, but spontaneous and inevitable." It is not improbable that this ode was written by Deborah herself, at any rate by a contemporary. It is thus one of the earliest literary

monuments in the Old Testament. As such it is remarkable that it should speak of the adherents of Jehovah not as those who fear him but as those who love him. It is also worthy of note that in the first of the preliterary prophets we have a complete fusion of patriotic zeal and religious enthusiasm. For Deborah there was no conflict between the will of God and the nation's call to arms.

Samuel.—The second of the preliterary prophets was Samuel. His activity fell in the latter half of the eleventh century B. C., toward the close of the period of the judges and the beginning of the monarchy. Somewhat extended accounts of him are to be found in 1 Samuel, but it is not easy to gather from them an altogether consistent view of his personality and work. The one signal service he rendered was in connection with the introduction of the monarchy. The land of Canaan had in his day fallen in large part under the domination of the Philistines. The people of Israel were threatened with the loss of their political independence, and at that time this would have been a fatal blow to the integrity of their religion. It was therefore a grave crisis that confronted the nation. How to meet it was a question that must have weighed heavily on the more earnest minds. Samuel, the seer of Ramah, had no doubt pondered the subject long when it dawned upon him that the one hope lay in the

union of the different tribes under a king. The thought came to him as a divine inspiration, just as the need of armed resistance to the Canaanites flashed upon the soul of Deborah. He consequently bided his time and, when Saul apparently by chance came to consult him about his father's lost asses, he recognized at once in the young man the chosen of Jehovah and secretly anointed him king (1 Sam. 10. 1). Soon afterward Saul had an opportunity to justify the confidence reposed in him by the relief of Jabesh-gilead, and this was followed by his public crowning at Gilgal (1 Sam. 11. 15). Later, however, a breach arose between Saul and Samuel. The personal ambitions of the king probably came into conflict with the ideals of the prophet. The result was that the prophet turned away from Saul and, according to 1 Sam. 16. 1-13, anointed David, the son of Jesse, king in his stead. Samuel thus stood in a direct relation to the kingship both of Saul and David.

How Samuel was able to exercise so great an influence in his day is not quite clear. Much is no doubt to be ascribed to his commanding personality and to the honor in which he was held as a seer; but a more important factor is perhaps to be found in his relation to the prophetic bands. In one instance he is represented as "standing as head over them" (1 Sam. 19. 20); and it is not at all improbable that

he recognized in them great possibilities of usefulness and so to some extent organized and directed their activities. Such enthusiastic groups of men, if intelligently guided, would inevitably exercise a considerable influence upon public opinion; and if they accepted in a general way the leadership of Samuel, this fact must have augmented to no small degree his power. In any case, he and they had the same general aim: they both felt the imperative necessity of deliverance from the foreign foe and were ready to adopt any expedient, even that of a king, in order to attain this end. It is therefore not improbable that they worked together in the establishment of the monarchy.

Nathan, Gad, Ahijah, Shemaiah.—After the time of Samuel there was during the period of the united monarchy (B. C. 1030–937) no great prophetic voice. However, the four prophets of this period, who are mentioned by name, were not without significance. The most striking of them was Nathan. His rebuke of David for his sin in the matter of Bath-sheba is evidence that even at that early date prophecy did not lack the stern ethical note (2 Sam. 12. 1-15). The form of the rebuke is also worthy of note. The prophet's "Thou art the man" has become a classic utterance. Gad represents the conservative tendency characteristic of the early prophets. Taking a census would not to-day be regarded as an evil, but in

David's time it was an innovation. And innovations were looked upon with suspicion as being without divine sanction. Then, too, the taking of a census indicated a tendency on the part of David to trust unduly in his newly won political power. Hence, when a pestilence befell the land, the prophet Gad saw in it a divine penalty for the king's numbering of the people (2 Sam. 24). Ahijah and Shemaiah are of interest in that they furnish evidence of the prophetic dissatisfaction with Solomon's reign despite all its pomp and power. Better, they felt, a divided and weaker kingdom than one that was tyrannical and permeated with heathen influences. Hence, Ahijah instigated the revolt of Jeroboam (1 Kings 11. 26-40), and Shemaiah is reported to have intercepted Rehoboam in his plan to reconquer the seceding tribes (1 Kings 12. 21-24).

Jehu, Micaiah, Jonah.—Between the division of the monarchy and the time of Amos (937–750) there were in addition to Ahijah and the false prophet Zedekiah five prophets, whose names have come down to us; and all these belonged to the northern kingdom. The latter fact may have been due to the greater importance of the northern realm and to the more critical situations it was forced to face. It was, for instance, exposed more directly to the attacks of the Syrians; and in its own government it underwent several revolutions. While in Judah

there was only one dynasty during this period, in Israel there were three, not including Zimri, who ruled seven days. Such an unsettled and threatening state of affairs would naturally arouse the prophets to unusual activity. Of the five prophets mentioned by name the first and last were of no special significance. The first, Jehu the son of Hanani, is said to have foretold the destruction of the house of Baasha (1 Kings 16. 1-4), just as the aged Ahijah before him had announced the ruin of the house of Jeroboam (1 Kings 14. 1-18). The last, Jonah the son of Amittai, is of interest chiefly because of the fact that his name is connected with the later book of Jonah. He was a prophet of the nationalistic type, having predicted in the early years of the second Jeroboam that the border of Israel would be restored from the entrance of Hamath unto the sea of the Arabah (2 Kings 14. 25). Of the remaining three prophets of this period Micaiah deserves to be remembered as the first prophet who was forced to stand his ground against a group of false prophets. Four hundred of the latter, including Zedekiah, predicted safety and victory for Ahab in case he went up to battle against Ramoth-gilead, while Micaiah foretold his death and defeat (1 Kings 22. 1-36). The scene recalls the later conflict between Jeremiah and Hananiah (Jer. 28).

Elijah and Elisha.—The two prophets of this

period yet to be dealt with are Elijah and Elisha. These men both made a profound impression upon their own time, and many miracles were attributed to them (see 1 Kings 17 to 2 Kings 13). With these miraculous narratives we are not here concerned, but with the general religious and historical significance of the men. And from this point of view Elijah was manifestly the more important of the two. Indeed, he was the greatest of the preliterary prophets. Personally he was the most aggressive and powerful, and from the standpoint of principle he made the most important contributions to the prophetic movement.

First, he reaffirmed in a striking way the righteousness of Jehovah. When Naboth was put to death through the machinations of Jezebel, that her husband, king Ahab, might become the possessor of his vineyard, Elijah denounced the king to his face and declared that as a penalty Jehovah would visit him and his house with destruction (1 Kings 21). In the second place, he developed the idea of the jealousy of Jehovah to a point where it not only absolutely excluded the worship of any rival deity in Israel, but also denied the very existence of such a deity. It was the peril growing out of the failure to recognize this truth that first aroused the prophet to action. Jezebel had introduced into Israel the worship of the Tyrian Baal. This threatened the

unity alike of the nation and its religion. Something, it was consequently felt, must be done to save the situation. Elijah became the mouthpiece of the opposition. A drought and famine accentuated his message of condemnation, and the struggle came finally to a climax on Mount Carmel (1 Kings 17, 18). There a dramatic victory was won by the intrepid prophet as he furnished miraculous proof that "Jehovah, he is God," and not Baal. But this victory did not end the conflict. Elijah fled to the ancient seat of Horeb, and there a third message was given him (19. 1-18). It came as "a still small voice," but it was nevertheless a message of doom—doom upon Israel as a whole for its apostasy. This was something new in the prophetic teaching. Doom had heretofore been pronounced upon individuals and groups, but now the whole nation was to be involved, and only a remnant saved.

The steps by which this doom was to be prepared were specified in Jehovah's words to Elijah, but Elijah himself did not carry them out. He simply appointed Elisha as his successor. It was the latter who instigated the revolution of Jehu, which put an end to the house of Ahab and destroyed the worship of the Tyrian Baal in Israel. After this event Elisha continued active for many years and on his deathbed predicted the victory of Joash over the Syrians (2 Kings 13. 14-21). But the political

aspects of his work were subordinate, and he made no important contribution to the religious thought of his day. Still, he as well as Elijah was regarded as a bulwark of the nation. Both at the end of their days were declared to be "the chariots of Israel and the horsemen thereof" (2 Kings 2. 12; 13. 14).

Topics and Questions for Discussion

The meaning of the word "preliterary" as applied to the prophets before Amos.

Why should Moses be distinguished from the preliterary prophets rather than classed with them?

The distinction between seer and prophet in the time of Samuel and the relation of the later prophets to both.

In what did Samuel's prophetic mission consist, and what did he accomplish for his people?

What does 1 Sam. 19. 18-24 indicate with reference to Samuel's relation to the prophetic bands of his day?

What is the special point of interest and significance in connection with Nathan, Gad, Ahijah, and Shemaiah?

Why were the prophets more active in the northern than the southern kingdom from B. C. 937 to 750?

What do we know concerning the prophets Jehu, Jonah, and Micaiah?

What three important messages did Elijah, according to 1 Kings 17-19 and 21, bring to the people of his day?

The work of Elisha and the sources of our information concerning him.

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CHAPTER III

THE EIGHTH-CENTURY PROPHETS

The Old Testament prophets, as we have seen, may be divided into three groups: the rank and file, the preliterary prophets, and the literary prophets. Of the first two of these groups we have already given some account. The last is, however, by far the most important. The literary prophets created the idea of prophecy proper and fixed its meaning. So much so is this the case that many scholars speak of the period before the advent of literary prophecy as the "preprophetic period," as if the preliterary prophets were not in the strict sense of the term prophets at all.

It has been customary since ancient times to divide the literary prophets into two classes: the four major and the twelve minor prophets. But this division was based simply on the length of the books and is of no special importance. It is more significant and more instructive to arrange them chronologically in three groups: the eighth-century prophets, the prophets of the Babylonian period, and the exilic and postexilic prophets. Each of these

groups will form the subject of a separate chapter. We deal in the present chapter with the first.

In beginning the study of the literary prophets several questions of a general nature arise. One has to do with the reason why the prophets of the eighth century reduced their oracles to writing, while those before them did not. To this question no positive answer can be given. But it is not improbable that written prophecy owed its origin to the literary tendency of the age. Men in other lines of activity were beginning to resort to the pen in order to disseminate their ideas, and hence the prophets did so too. Then, too, the unbelief which the eighth-century prophets encountered seems to have been more general and more pronounced than that of earlier times; and this would naturally lead them to commit their prophecies to written form in the hope that a future day would be more responsive to their message (Isa. 30. 8 f.). We are not, however, to suppose that the literary prophets were primarily authors; they were men of speech and action quite as much as their predecessors. Their work as writers was wholly incidental to their active ministry.

Another general question relative to the literary prophets concerns itself with the relation of their teaching to that of their predecessors. On this point there is danger of exaggeration. The difference was

not so great as many have thought. The eighth-century prophets were conscious of no sharp break with the past. They were not innovators. They felt themselves at one with Moses, Samuel, and Elijah. Furthermore it is evident from their writings that they must, in Emerson's words, "have had a long foreground somewhere for such a start." Their books presuppose centuries of reflection on the deep things of God. They were not "shot out of a pistol"; they were the ripe fruitage of a growth whose roots can be traced back to the time of Moses. Had it been possible for one of the earlier prophets to read these books he would have said, as did a Mohammedan woman after reading a Christian book of devotion, "That is what I have been trying to say all my life." What the eighth-century prophets did was simply to make more distinct and articulate the profoundest aspirations and convictions of the men of God who had gone before them. They did not so much create new ideas as deepen and clarify those of the past. They stood, therefore, in a relation of solidarity with preliterary prophecy.

Still another question arises with reference to the eighth-century prophets in general. This has to do with the historical conditions that lay back of their activity. In the time of Samuel and that of Elijah the prophetic movement, as we have seen, was contemporaneous with the Philistine wars in the one

case and the Syrian wars in the other. The danger and agitation of the time evidently stimulated the spirit of prophecy. Indeed, the prophets have been called the stormy petrels of the world's history. Some impending disaster usually led them to speak. It was so also in the eighth century. Then it was the aggression of the Assyrians that threatened the Hebrew kingdoms. No one can fully understand the prophetic utterances of the time who does not bear in mind the peril from this quarter and who does not have some acquaintance with contemporary Assyrian history. Four of the most aggressive Assyrian monarchs reigned during the latter half of the eighth century: Tiglath-pileser III (B. C. 747–727), Shalmaneser V (B. C. 727–722), Sargon II (B. C. 722–705), and Sennacherib (B. C. 705–681). All these kings came into contact with the Hebrews; and how profoundly this contact affected the fortunes of the Hebrew people may be judged from the fact that Samaria fell in B. C. 721 and with it the northern kingdom, and that in B. C. 701 Jerusalem barely escaped capture. It was Isaiah who stood in the closest relation to these events, but the general international situation formed also the vivid background of his contemporaries: Amos, Hosea, and Micah. The approaching doom, however, which these prophets announced, was not merely to be a political catastrophe. The outward misfortune about

to befall the state was to them simply the symbol of a far greater divine intervention, which would overwhelm all the powers of evil and bring in the kingdom of God. There was thus in their message a commingling of the temporal and the eternal, as is always the case with the true prophet of God.

Amos.—We are now prepared for a brief account of each of the four eighth-century prophets. First of the group was Amos. This fact alone, that he was the first of the literary prophets, is sufficient to entitle him to distinction; but apart from that he was a striking man with a striking message.

Of his life we know little—nothing, in fact, except what is contained in his book. From it we learn that his ministry fell in the reign of Jeroboam, probably about B. C. 750. His home was Tekoa, a village located twelve miles south of Jerusalem on a high hill giving a commanding view over the region round about. As a youth he had no special opportunities of training. He was not a prophet nor the son of a prophet. Indeed, he repudiated all connection with the professional prophets (7. 14). He was not dependent on others for support. He earned his bread by honest toil as a shepherd and trimmer of sycamore trees. But his mind on that account was none the less alert. He acquainted himself with the past of his own people and he knew what was going on about him. He was observant and reflective,

brooding over the evils and perils of his own time. Thus, unconsciously, he prepared himself for a special divine call, which came to him suddenly and "took" him from following the flock. The impulse that seized him sent him to the larger northern kingdom, there to proclaim his message of doom. His ministry was probably of brief duration, but it was of stirring power. The prophet put his finger on the sore spots of the body politic, and the land began to tremble. It "is not able to bear all his words," said the priest of Bethel in alarm. So Amos was ordered to return to Judah, and the order was probably obeyed, though not until he had repeated his message of doom in the very presence of the royal priest and applied it directly to the priest himself and his family. This seems to have ended the prophet's public ministry. But while silenced abroad, he could write at home. The pen took the place of the voice, and in this way the brief ministry at Bethel came to exercise a world-wide influence.

The book of Amos has at its close a brief word of hope (9. 8-15), but otherwise it is made up of an almost unrelieved message of doom. In chapters 1, 2 there is a poem pronouncing doom upon the surrounding nations and reaching its climax in a doom upon Israel. The latter doom, then, becomes the theme of the rest of the book down to 9. 8. Chapters 3-6 contain a miscellaneous collection of

oracles of judgment, and chapters 7 to 9. 7 a series of five visions of judgment. What, however, gives significance to the message of Amos is not his prediction of doom, but the reason for it. Elijah in his day predicted evil on the land because of the worship of the Tyrian Baal. But what Amos condemns is not the fact that the people do not worship Jehovah, but, rather, the fact that they do not worship him *in the right way.* Jehovah in his essential nature is a God of righteousness. The only worship, therefore, which he will accept is one that manifests itself in social justice. Religion is thus indissolubly bound up with conscience. To seek the good is to seek Jehovah, and to seek Jehovah is to seek the good (5. 6, 14). It is the clearness with which Amos laid hold of this great truth that gives to his teaching its epochmaking significance and that leads us to speak of him as in a special sense the prophet of righteousness.

Hosea.—Hosea was a younger contemporary of Amos. Concerning him also our only source of information is his own book. From it we gather that his ministry probably fell between B. C. 743 and 734. He belonged to the northern realm and is the only one of the writing prophets of whom this is true. His exact home, however, we do not know, nor do we know anything with certainty concerning the details of his life. It has been conjectured that

he was a priest, and this is quite possible in view of the frequency with which he refers to the priesthood and the high conception he had of the priestly office. It has also been maintained—and with somewhat greater confidence—that chapters 1 and 3 are to be interpreted literally. If so, the prophet married a woman, Gomer by name, who later proved untrue to him. Three children were born in the home, but they were not the prophet's own, and they were given names symbolic of the approaching doom and rejection of Israel. This situation became after a while intolerable, and the wife either fled or was driven from home. Later the prophet received a divine command to love his wayward wife and restore her to his home. This he did, buying her back from the bondage into which she had sold herself. If this was actually the experience of the prophet, we are able to understand somewhat better his conception of the supreme love of God for Israel; and his message comes to us with a new power if we realize that back of it lay a bleeding heart.

But whatever may have been the prophet's home experience, we know that he was a man of tender and sympathetic nature. He weeps over the sins of Israel, the anarchy within her borders, and the impending doom. Yet he does not lose hope. While his message is necessarily, like that of Amos, in large measure a message of judgment, he accords a larger

place to the promise of a better day to come (1. 10 to 2. 1; 2. 14-23; 3. 1-5; 11. 8-11; 14. 1-8). This he is able to do because of his stress on the divine love. He had an insight into the heart of God such as had been granted to no one before his time, and this insight made certain for him the redemptive purpose of God. He thus supplemented in a remarkable way the message of Amos. As the latter was the prophet of law and right, so Hosea was the prophet of love and hope.

Isaiah.—Isaiah, the third of the eighth-century prophets, began his ministry shortly after the beginning of that of Hosea. The date given is "the year that king Uzziah died" (Isa. 6. 1). This was probably B. C. 740. But Isaiah's ministry was much longer than Hosea's and was carried on in the southern kingdom. His home was Jerusalem. It is also not improbable that he was of noble birth. He was married and had two sons, to whom he gave symbolic names (7. 3; 8. 3). The prophetic call came to him when a young man. The description he has given of it is one of the most impressive chapters in all the Old Testament (chapter 6.) The vision he then received of the majesty and sovereignty of Jehovah went with him through life and imparted to him something of the same quality of mind. His was a regal nature. He trod the high places of the earth.

His ministry extended over a period of at least

forty years and possibly fifty or even fifty-five. It was one of the most critical periods in Hebrew history. In B. C. 734 came the war of Syria and Ephraim against Judah, which aimed at the capture of Jerusalem (Isa. 7. 1 ff.); in 732 Damascus, which had served as a bulwark between Israel and Assyria, fell; in 721 Samaria was captured; in 711 Ashdod met a similar fate; and in 701 Jerusalem barely escaped capture and destruction at the hands of Sennacherib. Crisis thus followed crisis in the national life, so that the people must have been kept in constant agitation. In it all Isaiah played an important role and throughout it maintained a consistent position. He opposed foreign alliances, as Hosea also did, and all attempts to solve the problems of the nation by force of arms. The one hope of the people, he insisted, lay in trust in Jehovah. So persistently did he preach this doctrine, and so basic was it in his teaching that he may be called "the prophet of faith."

Isaiah's faith manifested itself in several different ways: First, it gave him the conviction that Jerusalem was inviolable when on two notable occasions it was threatened by foreign enemies (7. 7; 37. 33). Secondly, it led him to teach that in the impending doom, which he as well as Amos and Hosea announced, a remnant would be saved. All the people would not be destroyed (7. 3; 10. 20-23). In the third place, it assured him that the coming judg-

ment would be followed by a glorious restoration. A veritable kingdom of God would be established with a Messianic Ruler at its head, a "Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace" (9. 6). The descriptions he has given us of the new era are among the sublimest passages in literature (see 2. 2-4; 11. 1-10).

It was Isaiah who first developed in this way the doctrine of faith. In originality he consequently ranks along with Amos and Hosea as one of the three great founders of literary prophecy. But in addition to this he possessed remarkable literary ability. As a writer he wielded a two-edged sword. Then, too, he had a strong and commanding personality, which, by virtue of his long ministry and high social station, he was able to bring to bear with tremendous influence upon the issues of his day. This combination of factors was unique in his case and has given to him a position of preëminence. He is generally regarded as the greatest of the prophets. This holds true even though we accept the current view that much of the book that bears his name was the work of other hands. Chapters 40-66, for instance, which contain some of the sublimest utterances in the Old Testament, are now commonly assigned to a prophet of unknown name, who lived about two centuries later and who is commonly referred to as Deutero-Isaiah. The work of this

prophet will come up for consideration in Chapter V.

Micah.—Micah, the last of the eighth-century prophets, was not equal to the others in importance. But he is nevertheless not without interest and significance. Of his life we know nothing except that he was a native of Moresheth, a village in the Judæan lowlands. He began his ministry before the fall of Samaria (1. 6); but when it ended we do not know. He was thus a contemporary of Isaiah but represented a different social class—the rural as opposed to the urban. Something of class spirit seems to manifest itself in his antipathy to the cities of Samaria and Jerusalem. He predicted in unqualified terms the destruction of Jerusalem (3. 12) at the very time that Isaiah was active in it. This prediction evidently produced a profound impression upon the people of his day. For a century later, in the time of Jeremiah, the elders recalled it and also the further fact that Hezekiah turned unto Jehovah, and hence the city was spared (Jer. 26. 16-19). In the message of Micah there is nothing distinctive unless it be found in the intensity with which he championed the cause of the poor. Some have consequently called him "the democrat" among the prophets. The most notable passage in his book is 6. 8. This is in some respects the greatest saying in the Old Testament. In it Micah sums up the

teaching of each of his three great predecessors or contemporaries and puts into a single formula the very quintessence of the prophetic revelation: "What doth Jehovah require of thee, but to do justly [Amos], to love kindness [Hosea], and to walk humbly with thy God" [Isaiah]?

Topics and Questions for Discussion

State two different methods of classifying the literary prophets.

What led to the rise of literary prophecy?

The importance of the literary prophets and the relation of their teaching to that of the preliterary prophets.

What facts concerning the life of Amos may be learned from his book?

The central teaching of Amos and its relation to that of Elijah. (Pick out the three or four sayings of Amos that you regard as most important.)

Hosea's date, home, and occupation.

How are we to interpret the first and third chapters of Hosea?

The distinctive message of Hosea. (Read the book of Hosea and mark the verses or passages which are most characteristic and striking.)

What do we know concerning the personal life of Isaiah?

The main political events in Isaiah's ministry and the policy he advocated.

Isaiah's distinctive message and the three different ways in which it was developed. (Notice, in addition to the passages cited in the text, 7. 4, 7; 8. 6; 18. 4; 28. 16; 30. 15.)

Name three main grounds of Isaiah's preëminence as a prophet.

Compare the life and teaching of Micah with that of Isaiah.

Give an estimate of the importance of Mic. 6. 8.

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CHAPTER IV

THE PROPHETS OF THE BABYLONIAN PERIOD

In the eighth century B. C. it was Assyria, as we have seen, that was the dominant power in Southwest Asia and in the world. It was the westward advance of her armies that hung as a threatening cloud over the Hebrew kingdoms and that filled the minds of the inspired prophets with the premonition of impending disaster. Doom was their constant theme. Damascus, the bulwark between Israel and Assyria, would fall. This was predicted by both Amos and Isaiah—an event that took place in B. C. 732. Samaria would then be overthrown—a prediction made by all the eighth-century prophets and fulfilled in B. C. 721. As to Jerusalem both its doom and marvelous deliverance seem to have been predicted. In B. C. 701 Judah was devastated by the Assyrian army (Isa. 1. 2-9). Hezekiah, the king, was shut up in Jerusalem like a caged bird. For a time he resisted the besiegers, but finally bought them off by the payment of a large ransom. The invaders then moved on toward Egypt, which was their ultimate objective; but a little later the Assyrian king Sennacherib seems to have repented of his bargain

with Hezekiah and in violation of his pledged word sent back a demand for the unconditional surrender of the city. Resistance seemed hopeless, yet Isaiah in that supreme crisis of the city's history stepped forth and confidently told the trembling king and his counselors that Sennacherib would never again lay siege to the city, but that the Lord would put his hook in his nose and lead him back by the way that he came. Outwardly there was not the slightest prospect that any such thing would occur, yet it did take place. Because of a pestilence or for some other reason Sennacherib suddenly stayed his advance into Egypt and returned to the homeland. Jerusalem was thus marvelously, almost miraculously delivered.

That this event was predicted by Isaiah and that he, along with other prophets, also foretold the fall of Damascus and of Samaria must have produced a profound impression upon the people of his day. It seems to have led Hezekiah to bring about a reform of the public worship, putting an end to various idolatrous practices of long standing (2 Kings 18. 4). But this public and general influence of the eighth-century prophets was apparently of short duration. Under the next king, Manasseh (686-641), there was a heathen reaction. The old idolatrous practices were revived, and new ones were introduced (2 Kings 21. 3 ff.) The true prophets were persecuted (2 Kings 21. 10-16) and

not improbably driven under cover, where in limited circles they continued their work in preparation for a better day to come. The deliverance from Assyria also did not apparently last long. For Manasseh was again subject to the Assyrian king. Isaiah at first had looked upon Assyria as the rod of Jehovah's anger and the staff of his indignation (Isa. 10. 5)—as an instrument used by Jehovah to punish Israel and other nations for their sins. But later he predicted the overthrow of Assyria herself (14. 24-27; 17. 12-14; 10. 16-34). However, despite these predictions Assyria continued to flourish. Under Sennacherib's successors, Esarhaddon (B. C. 681–668) and Ashur-bani-pal (B. C. 668-625), Egypt was conquered, Memphis and proud Thebes destroyed, and Assyria received her greatest extension of power. But the prophetic word, while delayed in its fulfillment, was not to be gainsaid. Even before the end of Ashur-bani-pal's reign the decline of the Assyrian power had begun, and after his death it became rapid. Babylon under Nabopolassar (B. C. 625-605) asserted its independence and fell heir to what was left of the Assyrian Empire. From about B. C. 625, therefore, we may date the beginning of the Babylonian period, though Nineveh, the capital city of Assyria, did not fall until B. C. 606.

The Babylonian period of Israel's history extended from about B. C. 625 to 538, but the

prophets whom we are to study in the present chapter all belong to the earlier part of the period. We call these men "the prophets of the Babylonian period," just as we might have called the eighth-century prophets "the prophets of the Assyrian period." It was the Babylonian Empire that constituted the chief menace to Judah toward the close of the seventh century B. C. and the beginning of the sixth, as it was the Assyrian Empire that threatened the existence of the two Hebrew kingdoms in the latter half of the eighth century. At first it was a question whether Palestine and Syria might not fall to Egypt rather than to Babylonia. The Egyptian king Necho took the lead in asserting his claim to these lands; and Josiah, the pious king of Judah, who rashly attempted to prevent his eastward advance, came to an untimely end (B. C. 609). But a few years later, at the great battle of Carchemish (B. C. 605), Necho was decisively defeated by Nebuchadrezzar; and from that time on until the capture of Babylon by Cyrus in B. C. 538 Palestine and Syria remained subject to the new Babylonian power. Judah, however, was restive under Babylonian rule, as she was a century earlier under Assyrian rule. A revolt took place in B. C. 597, which resulted in the capture of Jerusalem and the deportation of a considerable portion of its population. Ten years later another revolt broke out, and the result this time was the

destruction of the city and the end of the Hebrew monarchy (B. C. 586).

Prophets of this period.—To this critical and tragic period in Judah's history five of the literary prophets belong: two "major" (Jeremiah and Ezekiel) and three "minor" prophets (Zephaniah, Nahum, and Habakkuk). In this instance the "minor" prophets are of subordinate importance as well as comparatively brief. The three books of Zephaniah, Nahum, and Habakkuk contain each only three chapters. They are thus considerably shorter than the prophetic books we have already discussed. Concerning the three prophets themselves we also know almost nothing. Zephaniah, we learn from the superscription of his book, was of royal descent. His genealogy is carried back four generations to Hezekiah, who was no doubt the king of that name. Of Nahum we are simply told that he was an Elkoshite, that he came from the village of Elkosh, which was probably located on the southwestern border of Judah, not far from the home of Micah. Of Habakkuk we know nothing but the name. Brief, however, as these books are, and limited as is our knowledge of their authors, each one has its own special interest and significance.

Zephaniah.—The prophecy of Zephaniah was probably delivered about B. C. 627 and was perhaps occasioned by a threatened invasion of the Scythians,

who, according to Herodotus, terrorized Southwestern Asia during a large part of the second half of the seventh century B. C. His message centered in "the day of Jehovah"—a day of universal doom. Such a day, as we have seen, was by no means unknown to the eighth-century prophets, but its universality and the vague and miraculous character of its terrors received with Zephaniah a new emphasis (1. 2, 3, 14-18), so that his book has been described as "the first tinging of prophecy with apocalypse." Apocalypse, which became a very important movement in the next period and was such also in New Testament times, differs from prophecy chiefly in the stress it places upon the mysterious and supernatural character of the divine intervention in the world. Prophecy saw God in history; apocalypse saw him almost exclusively in miracle. The latter tendency received a new and striking expression in Zephaniah, and it is in that connection especially that the book is to be studied. While the doom which Zephaniah predicted was a universal one it was directed primarily against Judah, and the reasons for it did not differ materially from those found in the eighth-century prophets. Idolatry, indifference to Jehovah, and general iniquity had revived under the wicked king Manasseh; and it is these evils that Zephaniah condemns (1. 4, 5, 12; 3. 1-4).

Nahum.—The prophecy of Nahum probably dates

from about B. C. 607. It describes in brilliant and powerful verse the approaching doom of Nineveh, "the bloody city," and is the first prophetic book directed wholly against a foreign city or people. Nahum says nothing about the sins of Judah. But this does not necessarily mean that he was one of the nationalistic prophets condemned by Jeremiah. It simply means that he had his mind fixed on the universal reign of Jehovah and that he saw in the Nineveh of the past the chief barrier to the establishment of that reign. But it is nevertheless of interest that what was secondary with Amos and Isaiah is primary with Nahum. Nahum sees not in Israel herself but in a foreign foe the chief obstacle to the divine rule in the world. This tendency later became a predominant one among the Jews, many of whom saw in the heathen world as a whole the enemy of God.

Habakkuk.—The prophecy of Habakkuk should perhaps be put at about B. C. 600. We have here "the beginning of speculation in Israel." Here for the first time a prophet interrogated Jehovah as to his rule of the world. A similar questioning attitude appears also in Jeremiah, but there it has to do with the individual. In Habakkuk the question is national, and the problem is a double one. Why, the prophet asks, does Jehovah permit the wicked in Judah to go unpunished (1. 2-4)? The answer

given is that the Chaldeans, or Babylonians, are being raised up as ministers of the divine justice (1. 5-11). But this gives rise to another question: How can Jehovah appoint a wicked nation like the Babylonians as his agent to execute punishment upon a people who are "more righteous" than they (1. 12-17)? The final answer is that the wicked will be punished, but "the just shall live by faith"; or, more exactly, "the righteous shall live by his faithfulness" (2. 4). This is one of the most pregnant utterances in Scripture, and the fact that it originated with Habakkuk is in itself sufficient reason for remembering his book.

Jeremiah.—But while Zephaniah, Nahum, and Habakkuk are interesting as forerunners of the later apocalyptic, antiforeign, and speculative movements in Israel, they are quite overshadowed by their great contemporaries, Jeremiah and Ezekiel. The ministry of Jeremiah began in B. C. 626 and continued until after the fall of Jerusalem in B. C. 586. Concerning the details of his life we are more fully informed than in the case of any other prophet. This is due chiefly to the fact that he had a scribe by the name of Baruch, who seems to have written a biography of his master, considerable portions of which have been preserved for us in the book of Jeremiah. Of the personal experiences of the prophet during the reign of the good King Josiah

(B. C. 639–608) we know little. But during the reign of the reactionary Jehoiakim (B. C. 605–597) we find him subject to constant persecution. After a discourse in which he predicted the destruction of the Temple he was seized by the priests and prophets and barely escaped sentence of death (chapters 7 and 26). After the public reading of his written prophecies the king ordered him and his scribe arrested; but the Lord, we read, "hid them" (chapter 36). At another time his own townspeople of Anathoth conspired to put him to death (11. 18-23). At yet another time he was put in the stocks and kept overnight (19. 1 to 20. 6). Later, under the weak King Zedekiah (B. C. 597–586), the public and official hostility to him seems at first to have been less aggressive. But after the final revolt against Babylonia he was again arrested, imprisoned, and at one time thrust into a slimy cistern, where he would have perished had he not been rescued by Ebed-melech the Ethiopian (38. 6-13). After the capture of the city and the assassination of Gedaliah he was against his will carried away to Egypt, where he continued his prophetic activity and, according to tradition, met a martyr's death.

The opposition and persecution to which the prophet was thus subjected throughout most of his ministry were chiefly due to the fact that his message ran counter to the dominant public sentiment of the

day. It was a critical and perilous time in which he lived. Not only the independence but the very existence of the nation was at stake. How to meet the crisis was the question uppermost in the minds of all the thoughtful people in Jerusalem. Two main answers were given: One was that of the politician —intrigue and force. The other was that of the priest and prophet—scrupulous attention to the public worship of Jehovah. With neither of these policies was Jeremiah satisfied. The first he strongly condemned and the second he regarded as altogether inadequate. The result was that he awakened the opposition of both the militaristic and the ecclesiastical party. As against the militarists he insisted that the only safe policy for the state to follow was to remain subject to Babylonia. And as over against the ecclesiastics he declared that no outward reform of worship—even though it be as radical as that under Josiah in B. C. 621—would guarantee the divine favor. The sin of Judah was so deep-seated that it had become second nature to her (13. 23). Nothing short of a change of heart would therefore suffice (4. 3, 4). There must be a new covenant written not on tables of stone but on the hearts of men (31. 31-34). Jeremiah thus stressed the inwardness of religion as those before him had not done. It was he who "first discovered the soul and its significance for religion."

But even more important than his public teaching was his own personal relation to God. The prophets before his time had dealt chiefly with the nation, and this continued to be the main theme of Jeremiah's preaching. But beyond that his own experiences constituted for him a problem. He felt at times that God was not dealing fairly with him and bitterly complained of the treatment he was receiving, even cursing the day he was born (20. 14-18). But despite all these complaints he did not lose his hold on God but struggled through to the conviction that, after all, life's chief good is to be found in fellowship with the divine (15. 19). This is a new note in Jeremiah—one that warrants our speaking of him as "the prophet of personal piety."

Ezekiel.—Ezekiel was a younger contemporary of Jeremiah. He was carried into captivity in the first deportation in B. C. 597 and settled at Tel-abib, on the banks of a canal known as "the river Chebar." The prophetic call came to him in B. C. 592, and the last date mentioned in his book is B. C. 570. His ministry thus extended over at least twenty-two years, six of which preceded the fall of Jerusalem. Of his life and activities we know little. He was married and occupied his own house, but his wife died at about the time Jerusalem was captured (24. 15-24). How he carried on his public ministry among the exiles, we do not know. Occasionally

the elders met him at his home (8. 1; 14. 1; 20. 1), and at other times he no doubt sought out the people. At first his message did not differ essentially from that of Jeremiah. It was one of doom upon Jerusalem, his motive being to prepare the minds of the exiles for the impending catastrophe (chapters 1-24). But after the fall of the city it became one of hope and consolation (34-48). There would, he assured the people, be "showers of blessing." His own style is for the most part not such as to appeal to the modern reader. It is prosaic and diffuse, and his imagery is often strange, even to the point of seeming to us grotesque (compare 4. 1 to 5. 4; 12. 1-7). But it was apparently a style that appealed to the people of his day. To them he was "as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument" (33. 32).

Despite his popularity as a speaker, however, Ezekiel had at first little real influence with his fellow exiles. Not until his word was fulfilled by the fall of Jerusalem did he come to be generally recognized as a true prophet. But from that time on he seems to have exercised an increasing influence not only on his own but on subsequent generations. He was priest as well as prophet, and it was he who first formulated a body of laws for the restored community (chapters 40-48). He thus prepared the way for the church of the second Temple and became

"the father of Judaism." This was so great an achievement that he has been declared to be "the most influential man that we find in the whole course of Hebrew history." But from the prophetic point of view what interests us most in connection with Ezekiel is his message concerning the individual (18; 33. 10-20). Jeremiah had raised the problem of God's dealing with the individual so far as he himself was concerned. But he did not generalize the problem. Ezekiel was the first to do that, and the way in which he did it has given to his teaching on that point epochmaking significance. God, he tells us, stands in a direct relation to every individual. "All souls are mine," says Jehovah. Every man will be judged by his own deserts. There is, in strict literalness, no hereditary guilt and no vicarious suffering. For every person it is possible to turn to God and live. "As I live, saith the Lord Jehovah, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?" (33. 11). It is this great message that justifies our speaking of Ezekiel as "the prophet of individualism."

Topics and Questions for Discussion

Important predictions made by the eighth-century prophets and the effect of their fulfillment.

The history of Assyria in the seventh century B. C. and its relation to that of Judah. (Read, if possible, the accounts in a history of Assyria and in an Old Testament or Hebrew history, such as that by Peritz, Wade, Ottley, Sanders, or Kent.)

The rise of the new Babylonian Empire and its relation to Judah. (Read the accounts in one or more of the histories already mentioned.)

What is the distinctive element in Zephaniah's message?

What is the difference between prophecy and apocalypse?

When was the book of Nahum written, and in what respect does it differ from the other preëxilic prophetic books?

What new problem is dealt with by Habakkuk, and how is it developed in 1. 2 to 2. 4?

Why are we better informed concerning Jeremiah than any other prophet, and what are the main facts in his life?

The two parties in Judah and the reasons for Jeremiah's opposition to both.

The new element in Jeremiah's life and teaching. (Single out five or six of the most characteristic and significant sayings or passages in the book.)

What do we know concerning the personal life of Ezekiel?

Ezekiel's literary style and the very noticeable

change in the character of his message after the fall of Jerusalem.

Why has Ezekiel been called "the father of Judaism"?

Ezekiel's doctrine of individualism and its relation to the teaching of Jeremiah. (Read Ezek. 3. 16-21; 14. 12-20; 18; 33. 1-20.)

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CHAPTER V

THE POSTEXILIC PROPHETS

The third group of literary prophets had no such unity of background as the other two. The eighth-century prophets all came close together and were active during a comparatively limited period of time —fifty or sixty years. This was also the case with the prophets of the Babylonian period. Essentially the same conditions consequently confronted all the members of each of these groups. But the postexilic prophets were scattered over almost four centuries; and the conditions that lay back of their activities naturally varied in different cases. Less of uniformity is therefore to be expected in this group than in the first two.

It is customary to subdivide the postexilic period of Old Testament history into the Persian and Greek periods. The Persian period extended from the fall of Babylon in B. C. 538 to the conquest of Palestine by Alexander the Great in B. C. 332. The Greek period, beginning in B. C. 332, ended with the Maccabean revolt, which may be regarded as having achieved its immediate purpose by B. C. 165. Of the Jewish community during the Persian period we

know but little. Only three important events fixed themselves in the national memory: the return from Babylon (B. C. 536), the rebuilding of the Temple (B. C. 520–516), and the rebuilding of the wall of Jerusalem under Nehemiah and Ezra (B. C. 444). In connection with the Greek period the main fact to be noted is the growing conflict between the inherited Jewish faith and the naturalistic or irreligious tendency of Greek civilization, by which the Jews were now being surrounded. It was this conflict that came to a head in the attempt of Antiochus Epiphanes to destroy the Hebrew religion and in the revolt of the Maccabees. The struggle that then ensued was of critical significance for the history of religion, and the time in which it fell was comparable in intensity of feeling to that which preceded the fall of Jerusalem in B. C. 586.

The Exile produced a profound impression upon the Jewish people. After it they were never again the same either politically or religiously. The monarchy was at an end, and henceforth the Jews were subject to a foreign power. Their own local government fell gradually into the hands of the priests. What we thus have in the postexilic period was not a Jewish state but a church. The political ambitions of preëxilic times were at an end. There was no aggressive nationalism, no militaristic spirit, against which the prophets were forced to contend as in

earlier days. Then, too, the religious situation was not the same. In the preëxilic period the prophets had stood face to face with a formidable heathen current in the life of the people. Idolatry was common, and heathen rites and customs were in vogue in connection with the worship of Jehovah. But this was changed by the Exile. What the spoken words of the prophets had not been able to accomplish was effected by the logic of events. The captivity proved irresistibly the truth of the prophetic message; and when the Jews emerged from their exile, it was as a monotheistic people. The prophetic faith was now the faith of the community as a whole. Evils, of course, still existed, but they were of a different kind. The religious needs of the people, consequently, were no longer the same as they had been. We observed how Ezekiel, after the fall of Jerusalem, changed the character of his message. A similar change is naturally to be expected in the case of the postexilic prophets in general as compared with their predecessors. They adapted their messages to the altered conditions of their own time; and this gave to postexilic prophecy a somewhat different cast from that of the earlier and "classic" prophecy, as it may be called.

Deutero-Isaiah.—It is a great prophet of unknown name who introduces us to the postexilic period. His prophecies, issued anonymously, came somehow to

be attached to the book of Isaiah, where they now form chapters 40-66. For this reason he is usually known as the Second or Deutero-Isaiah, just as the fifth book of Moses is called Deutero-nomy, or the "second law." Deutero-Isaiah apparently began his ministry shortly before the capture of Babylon in B. C. 538. For he represents Cyrus as already on the scene (44. 28; 45. 1); victory is attending his steps (41. 2); through him Jehovah is about to perform his pleasure on Babylon (48. 14). But how long after the fall of the city Deutero-Isaiah continued his ministry is not certain. Chapters 56-66 seem to imply that he was still active after the rebuilding of the Temple in B. C. 520–516 (56. 5, 7; 60. 7, 13). His home, it is commonly assumed, was in Babylonia, at least before the return of the exiles. But this is by no means certain. His prophecies give no definite indication on this point. To an extraordinary degree he detached himself from his local surroundings and hid himself behind his message. As we read his book we see no form; we simply hear a voice. It is quite possible that he may have lived in Palestine or Phœnicia, or even Egypt. But wherever he lived he had a watchtower from which he surveyed the four corners of the earth, so that in a real sense the whole world was his parish.

In richness of feeling, in depth of religious insight, and in inspiring power there is no prophetic

book that equals that of Deutero-Isaiah. He represents the climax of prophetic thought and the high-water mark of Old Testament spirituality. At bottom his message was like that of Ezekiel after the fall of Jerusalem. It was one of hope. "Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem." (40. 1 f.) These opening words of his book represent its prevailing tone throughout. But hope with him was no mere sentiment; it rested on a wonderful conception of the greatness and grace of God. In no other book do we find the creatorship of Jehovah, his eternity, his transcendent power, and his infinite mercy emphasized as we do here. With words of moving tenderness he lays bare the heart of God.

It was not only hope for the future that Deutero-Isaiah sought to awaken among the discouraged Jews. He interpreted their present sufferings in a way that must have made it easier to bear them. They, he told them, were the "servant" nation. They had a world mission to perform, and the hardships they were now enduring were only incidental to the performance of that mission. Their suffering was vicarious. It was for the transgressions of others that they were being wounded and for the iniquities of others that they were being bruised. It is this idea of self-sacrificing service for the redemption of mankind that, above everything else, gives to Deu-

tero-Isaiah's prophecies a unique character. Nowhere else in the Old Testament do we find such an interpretation of Israel's sufferings, and nowhere else is such stress laid on the universality of the approaching redemption. "Look unto me," says Jehovah, "and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else" (45. 22). This note, so often struck by Deutero-Isaiah, makes it proper to regard him as "the prophet of universalism."

Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi.—The high hopes of a glorious future, raised by Deutero-Isaiah, were not, however, destined to be realized by the returning exiles, nor were they realized at any time during the postexilic period. During virtually the whole of this period the Palestinian Jews were subject to foreign governments and lived under very discouraging circumstances. But hope did not on that account die out, nor did the people lose their national or racial consciousness nor their interest in organized religion; rather did these tendencies become all the more pronounced. Organized religion took the form of an elaborate legalistic system, the national feeling became more exclusive than ever, and hope took on a more distinctly Messianic, or apocalyptic character. Indeed, these three tendencies were the main characteristics of postexilic Judaism: legalism, exclusiveness, and Messianism. It was therefore inevi-

table that the prophetic literature of the time should be affected by them, and as a matter of fact the remaining prophetic books may be classified along these three lines.

Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi reflect the legalistic tendency. This tendency had already received a great impetus from Ezekiel. He had made the rebuilding of the Temple a conspicuous part of his plans for the restored community (chapters 40-43), and it was at this point that the work of Haggai and Zechariah began. Of the personal life of Haggai we know nothing, and of Zechariah we are simply told that he was "the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo." According to Neh. 12. 4 a man by the name of Iddo was chief of one of the priestly families that returned from exile in B. C. 537, and if the prophet Zechariah was his grandson he probably was born in Babylonia and came to Jerusalem as a child. But there is nothing in his or Haggai's sermons to indicate that either of them was a returned exile. The substance of four of Haggai's sermons has been handed down to us. They were all delivered during the latter half of the year B. C. 520 and all bore directly or indirectly upon the rebuilding of the Temple. So eloquent were these discourses that twenty-three days after the first of them work was actually begun on the Temple. It was Haggai's belief that the failure to rebuild the Temple had

stood in the way of the coming of the Messianic kingdom, and that its rebuilding would be followed by the advent of the new age with Zerubbabel as its Messianic king. This general view was also shared by Zechariah, whose earliest prophecy is dated shortly after Haggai's second sermon (1. 1), and whose latest dated prophecy was delivered about two years later (7. 1). It was his chief aim also to encourage the Jews in the rebuilding of the Temple by assuring them that the new and long-expected better day would soon come.

As to "Malachi" we are not even certain that this was the prophet's name. The word "Malachi" means "my messenger" and in this general sense is used in 3. 1, where it may have been mistaken by some editor for the prophet's name and so placed at the head of the book. In that case the prophecy was originally anonymous. It is a common opinion that "Malachi" was the last of the prophets, and that his book was the latest in the Old Testament; but this is a mistaken view. It is now quite generally agreed among scholars that he lived at about the time of Ezra and Nehemiah—somewhere near B. C. 450; for he condemns the same evils as they, such as mixed marriages and the failure to pay tithes. On the importance of a pure Temple worship and the externals of religion he is quite insistent. He thus represents the same priestly interest as Haggai and

Zechariah. But he as well as they by no means made these externals the essence of religion. Religious institutions and rites demanded in their day special attention. Hence, like true prophets, they made them the particular theme of their preaching; but in so doing they did not overlook the weightier matters of the law. Righteousness for them as for the earlier prophets was the basic requirement of Jehovah.

Obadiah and Jonah.—The antiforeign and exclusive tendency in postexilic Judaism seems to have been encouraged by some of the prophets and opposed by others. This is illustrated by the books of Obadiah and Jonah. Obadiah is the shortest book in the Old Testament, consisting of only one chapter. Of its author's life we know nothing. He probably lived about the time of Malachi or shortly before (B. C. 460), as Mal. 1. 2-5 apparently refers to the same situation as that dealt with by Obadiah. The book of Obadiah contains two parts. The first (1-14, 15a) is a doom on Edom for its hostility to Judah, and the second (15b-21) is a doom on the nations in general, including Edom. This doom is to be accompanied by the establishment of the Messianic kingdom. The spirit of the book is expressed by the words addressed to Edom in verse 15: "As thou hast done, it shall be done unto thee; thy dealing shall return upon thine own head." There is in

it not a word of sympathy or of hope for the heathen world.

In striking contrast to this spirit is the book of Jonah. The author of this book lived perhaps about B. C. 300, but of him we know nothing whatsoever, not even his name. Unlike all the other prophetic books, Jonah is almost wholly narrative. The story it relates is to be regarded as imaginative throughout, as were the parables of Jesus, except that there was a prophet by the name of "Jonah the son of Amittai," who lived about B. C. 775 and who predicted the expansion of Israel's territory under Jeroboam II. Why this preliterary prophet was chosen as the subject of the story is not certain, but in view of what is recorded of him in 2 Kings 14. 25 he may naturally have been looked upon as a representative of that narrow nationalism which rejoiced in the overthrow of Israel's enemies. In any case this is the function that he serves in the story. Jonah stands for narrow and exclusive Israel, while Nineveh represents the hated heathen world. It was Israel's mission to be "a light to the Gentiles." This was plainly and impressively stated by Deutero-Isaiah. But Israel did not respond to the call. She fled from it, as did Jonah. She was swallowed up by Babylon (Jer. 51. 34, 44), as Jonah was by the great fish. But she was still unchanged in heart. She was quite willing to pronounce doom upon the

heathen, as Jonah did upon Nineveh, but the repentance and redemption of the heathen her hate could not tolerate. It is this spirit that the book of Jonah most beautifully and impressively rebukes. Israel, like Jonah, was wonderfully tender toward herself when any misfortune befell her, and she was also not without capacity for affection, as is evidenced by Jonah's concern for the gourd. But if she was capable of affection for so insignificant a thing as a gourd, which had had but a transient relation to her life, "should not I," asks Jehovah, "have regard for Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than sixscore thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand; and also much cattle" (4. 11)? There is nothing in all the Old Testament which surpasses this in the tenderness and the power of its appeal. The man who wrote it is to be classed among the greatest of the prophets. Peake well says "That out of the stony heart of Judaism such a book should come is nothing less than a marvel of divine grace."

Joel and Daniel.—Messianism, or apocalypticism, the third main characteristic of postexilic Judaism above mentioned, was the natural outgrowth of prophetism. Between the two there is no antithesis. There is more or less of the apocalyptic in all prophecy, and there is more or less of the prophetic in all apocalypse. The transition from prophecy to

apocalypse was a gradual one. A considerable impetus in this direction, as we have seen, was given by Zephaniah. There is also not a little of the distinctly apocalyptic in Ezekiel. We furthermore have an important apocalypse in Isa. 24-27, which was probably written in the third century B. C., and from a little later date we have a less important one in Zech. 9-14. But the two complete books that represent this tendency best are Joel and Daniel.

The book of Joel represents a less developed form of the apocalypse than Daniel. Indeed, it is not long ago that it was regarded as the earliest prophetic book, antedating Amos. But this view is now generally abandoned. The book of Joel belongs to the postexilic period and may have been written about B. C. 400, though it is quite possible that its date should be put a century or a century and a half later. Concerning the prophet himself we are simply told that he was "the son of Pethuel." His interest in the Temple and the sacrifices suggests that he was a priest. The occasion of his prophecy was a visitation of locusts that devastated the land. A vivid description of this plague is given. But what lends significance to it is the fact that it is regarded as the immediate forerunner of the day of Jehovah—a day that is described in true apocalyptic fashion as "a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness. . . . I will show wonders in

the heavens and in the earth: blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood" (2. 2, 30, 31). Upon the heathen it is to be a day of doom, but upon Israel it is to be a day of the outpouring of the Spirit: "Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams" (2. 28). While interested in the externals of religion Joel by no means forgot the old prophetic stress on the inner life. "Rend your heart, and not your garments" is a classic expression that we owe to him (2. 13).

The book of Daniel is not included among the prophetic books in the Hebrew Bible. This probably was due to its date. The prophetic canon—that is, the collection of prophetic books regarded as sacred—was closed by the year B. C. 200. Any prophetic book, therefore, written after that date, if accepted as inspired, necessarily would be put into another group. So in the Hebrew Bible, which consists of three divisions—the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings—we find the book of Daniel in the last. It is now quite generally agreed by scholars that the book of Daniel was written about B. C. 165. It is a book concerning Daniel rather than one by him. The Daniel here referred to is supposed to have lived about B. C. 550. Chapters 1-6 narrate his history, and chapters 7-12 give an account of his visions. The book makes a powerful appeal to the imagina-

tion and was admirably adapted to meet the needs of the critical situation in which it originated. In B. C. 168 Antiochus Epiphanes attempted the complete destruction of the Jewish religion. The rite of circumcision and the observance of the Sabbath were prohibited, and the Temple was desecrated by the erection of an altar to the Olympic Zeus and by the sacrifice of a swine within its sacred precincts, the latter act being called by the author of Daniel "the abomination of desolation" (11. 31; 12. 11). The inevitable result of this line of action on the part of Antiochus Epiphanes was a revolt. The revolt was led by the Maccabees, and it was to encourage them and their followers that the book of Daniel was written. The author recounted the heroic and inspiring example of Daniel and put in his mouth the assurance that the present Greek kingdom would soon come to an end and would be superseded by a new and universal kingdom—a kingdom to be ruled over by "one like unto a son of man," "an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away" (7. 13, 14). As a further inspiration to heroism and a warning against apostasy he also announced the great truth, not yet held by many Jews, that "many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt" (12. 2). This stirring book, despite the difficulties connected with the interpretation of some

of its details, forms in its essential nature a fitting close to that long list of prophetic utterances which give to Israelitic history its unique character and abiding worth, and which bear in themselves the unmistakable stamp of their divine origin.

Topics and Questions for Discussion

Why is there less of uniformity among the post-exilic prophets than in the two earlier groups of literary prophets?

The extent, subdivisions, and main facts of the postexilic period of Israel's history. (Consult Peritz or some other Old Testament history.)

In what respects was both the political and religious situation of the Jews changed by the Exile?

Who was "Deutero-Isaiah," and when and where did he live?

The religious importance of Isa. 40-66.

The message of hope in Deutero-Isaiah and its relation to his conception of God. (Read Isa. 40-55 and mark the passages that express most strikingly the ideas of hope and of the divine grace.)

What are the two most characteristic elements in Deutero-Isaiah's teaching?

The three main tendencies in the religious life and thought of the postexilic Jews.

The date of Haggai and Zechariah, their work and teaching, and their relation to Ezekiel.

The date of the book of Malachi, the general character of its teaching, and its relation to Haggai and Zechariah, on the one hand, and Ezra and Nehemiah, on the other.

The date of Obadiah: its general character and spirit.

Contrast the spirit of the book of Jonah with that of Obadiah.

When was the book of Jonah written, and why was the preliterary prophet Jonah selected as the subject of the story?

How is the book of Jonah to be interpreted, and what is to be said of its importance?

The date and general character of Isa. 24-27 and Zech. 9-14.

The date, occasion, and general character of the book of Joel.

Why is the book of Daniel not included in the list of prophetic books in the Hebrew Bible?

In what group is it included?

The date of the book of Daniel: its two main divisions, its occasion, its purpose, and its central teaching.

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CHAPTER VI

PROPHECY AND THE NATION

THUS far we have dealt with the history of the prophetic movement. We have studied briefly the rank and file of the prophets, the preliterary prophets, and the three groups of the literary prophets. In presenting this historical outline we discussed incidentally the nature of prophecy and in a general way the teaching of the individual prophets. But no attempt was made to treat in a systematic way the relation of prophecy to the nation and its contributions to religion. To do this is now our task. In the present chapter we deal with the prophetic attitude toward the nation and the prophetic teaching concerning it. In the following chapters we take up four of the most important aspects of religious life and belief and consider each of these in so far as prophecy had a bearing upon them.

The national character of prophecy.—It has already been pointed out that the prophetic movement was primarily concerned with the nation, not the individual. It was the *national* need in the time of Samuel which gave rise to the movement. It was the

national peril in the ninth century which led to the prophetic activity under the leadership of Elijah and Elisha. It was the threatened overthrow of the *nation* at the hands of the Assyrians which stirred the eighth-century prophets to speech and action. It was a similar peril to the *nation* a century later at the hands of the Scythians and Babylonians which led Zephaniah and Jeremiah to prophesy and which formed the disturbing background of the earlier part of Ezekiel's ministry. It was the prospect of a *national* restoration which inspired the messages of Deutero-Isaiah. It was the attempted destruction of the *national* religion which the book of Daniel sought to thwart. Thus, throughout its entire history prophecy was actuated by national considerations. It was the national life that gave birth to prophecy. Without the contagion of national feeling there would have been no prophetic movement. It was the value consciously or unconsciously attributed to the nation which formed the presupposition of the movement as a whole.

This, however, does not mean that the spirit of prophecy was identical with that of patriotism, nor that the nation as such was necessarily the object of chief worth in life. We need to distinguish between political and racial nationalism, on the one hand, and nationalism as expressive of the social idea, on the other. It was the latter that was basic

with the prophets. It was the social impulse that was controlling with them. What they sought was the common good, not the good of any one class nor of the individual as such. The individual cannot exist apart from society. It is the social life that alone makes the life of the individual either possible or worth while. But the social life with the prophets was not limited to human beings. It took in the divine, and at times it became important that emphasis should be placed upon the direct relation of the individual to God, as was done by Jeremiah and Ezekiel. But the relation of the individual to God was not with them something isolated; it was only part of a broader human-divine fellowship. And this human-divine fellowship would have been abstract and unreal to the prophets if it had not been identified with the actual covenant relation between Israel and Jehovah. The people of that day had not yet come to the point where it was possible for them to detach the social or religious idea from its embodiment in a definite political or racial group. In their thought the idea of God and his kingdom carried with it the idea of Israel. For them the divine purpose was bound up with the Israelitic nation. This was the belief of the prophets as well as of the people in general. They therefore naturally and logically looked forward to the permanent existence of the Hebrew nation. Without the nation in some cor-

porate form religion itself would have seemed to them to vanish.

The contrast between the real and the ideal.—But while the prophets held to the certainty and necessity of the continued existence of the Israelitic nation they distinguished in this connection between real Israel and ideal Israel. It was ideal Israel that alone enjoyed complete fellowship with Jehovah and that would permanently endure; real Israel had failed to meet the divine requirements and was doomed to destruction. This contrast between the fate of the nation as it was and the destiny of the nation as it ought to be and would be, was first clearly drawn by the writing prophets. But their predecessors, however confident they may have been that actual Israel would never be destroyed, were by no means blind to its sins and to the necessity of their punishment. Deborah distinguished sharply between the heroic and the craven elements in the nation and pronounced a curse upon the inhabitants of Meroz "because they came not to the help of Jehovah, to the help of Jehovah against the mighty." Ahijah, despite the glamour of Solomon's reign saw in it evils so grave that he instigated the revolt of Jeroboam. And Elijah was so outraged by the defection from Jehovah in the time of Ahab that it seemed to him necessary that a punishment should befall Israel so severe that out of it only a remnant

of seven thousand would escape (1 Kings 19. 15-18). It was, however, the eighth-century prophets who first made the doom of the nation the main theme of their preaching. They looked upon Israel as a fallen race. The loyalty and whole-hearted devotion of the people during the Mosaic period had been of short duration. It was soon followed by a fatal lapse (Hos. 9. 10; 11. 1, 2). The glories of the Davidic and Solomonic age also belonged to the past. The nation now stood condemned. The bond between it and Jehovah was virtually broken, and the day of judgment was at hand. But the more the prophets despaired of real Israel, the more confident they became of the reality and perpetuity of ideal Israel. The nation as it was would soon come to an end, but on its ruins would arise a new and more glorious nation—a nation in which righteousness and peace would reign, and which would abide forever. It was this ideal Israel that the prophets had constantly before their minds, and in the light of it they could not but condemn the real Israel as they saw it about them. Their idealism made them "the troublers of Israel."

The course of events, however, did not confirm their hopes. The fall of Judah was not followed by the Messianic era. In the postexilic community there was still a striking contrast between the real and the ideal. Prophets were consequently still needed

to proclaim faith in the ideal. But in so doing they were actuated by a somewhat different motive from the preëxilic prophets. Their purpose was not so much to condemn the wicked as to encourage the faint-hearted. The reason for this was the fact that the contrast that now existed between the real and the ideal was not so much ethical as it was material. It was the poverty and wretchedness of the present rather than its moral evils which stood in such glaring contrast with the ideal kingdom that had been expected. Wickedness in abundance there still was in the world, but it was wickedness outside of Israel rather than in it. What the Jews therefore needed was not so much condemnation as encouragement, and this the postexilic prophets sought to give them by reviving faith in the speedy coming of the Messianic kingdom.

Methods of realizing the ideal.—The question now arises how the prophets expected the new and better order to be introduced. Three different methods may be distinguished: force, moral suasion, miracle. Miracle, it is true, might be regarded as an exercise of force; but force, as commonly understood, refers to human agency, while miracle implies the divine. It is also possible to look upon miracle as a divine accompaniment of human force or moral suasion rather than as a third and distinct method; and it is of course true that human force and moral

suasion do not necessarily exclude an admixture of divine aid. Indeed, moral suasion is the form under which the divine Spirit as a rule most distinctly manifests itself. But the prophetic teaching will be better understood if we distinguish miraculous divine agency from the other two methods. Of these methods force, as we have already seen, was occasionally resorted to by the preliterary prophets. Ahijah was active in connection with the revolt of Jeroboam, and Elisha instigated the revolution of Jehu. This method, however, seems to have been renounced by the literary prophets. Hosea, for instance, severely condemned the bloody acts of Jehu, which a century before seem to have received prophetic approbation (Hos. 1. 4; 2 Kings 10. 30). And none of the writing prophets resorted to political intrigue or attempted to stir up revolution. Their method was that of the spirit, an appeal to the consciences of men. By word of mouth and dramatic act they sought to arouse the people to a sense of the national danger and summoned them to repentance and reformation.

But it would be a mistake to suppose that the prophets believed that mere preaching would be sufficient to bring in the new era. Their own experience taught them something very different from that. For the most part the people turned a deaf ear to their messages, and the influence they exer-

cised in their own day was comparatively slight. Moral instruction has its value in the world, but without the discipline of life itself it is relatively ineffective. What eventually made the prophetic teaching effective was the fact that it was confirmed by the hard experiences of the Exile. But these experiences, no matter how much Israel took them to heart, did not bring in the new era. For Israel did not hold its fate in its own hands; it was part of a world system, and so long as this world system remained predominantly evil there was no possibility of an ideal national life. The world as a whole must, therefore, first be redeemed; and this lay not only beyond human power but beyond the power of the ordinary workings of the divine Spirit. For it an extraordinary act of God was needed. So the prophets looked forward to a marvelous divine intervention. This was true of all the literary prophets and especially those of the postexilic period. Moral suasion, however divinely inspired, could not bring about the result to which they looked forward. The ultimate hope of the world lay in the miraculous intervention of Jehovah. And that this would come, they all believed, and believed that it would come soon.

War.—In this connection a word should be added concerning the prophetic attitude toward war. The literary prophets, as we have just seen, eschewed

the use of force so far as they themselves were concerned. But they not only did that: they also condemned the political intrigue and militaristic policy of their own government. The leaders of the day believed that by means of foreign alliances and by a revolt now against Assyria and now against Babylonia they would be able to improve the condition of the nation. Especially did they count on the aid of Egypt. But, said Isaiah, "the Egyptians are men, and not God; and their horses flesh, and not spirit" (31. 3). By this he meant that the controlling forces in the world are spiritual, not material. It is not forty-two-centimeter guns nor submarines nor giant battle planes that ultimately determine the course of events, but the divine purpose. The thing for Israel to do, therefore, was to avoid foreign alliances and the wars connected with them, and simply trust God. He, and he only, was the nation's hope.

At first this may seem like an indorsement of radical pacifism. And it is true that the prophets generally looked forward to a universal reign of peace. One of the sublimest passages in all Scripture is Isa. 2. 2-4, where the prophet looks forward to a time when all disputes between nations shall be settled by arbitration, and men "shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks," and "nation shall not lift up sword

against nation, neither shall they learn war any more." But it would be a mistake to infer from this that the prophets condemned war under all circumstances. They were by no means doctrinaires. They did not argue that the use of force is wrong in principle, and that, therefore, all war is evil. As sensible men they knew that force in their own day was necessary if order was to be maintained in a city, and necessary also if order was to be maintained in the world. What led them to condemn the resort to arms on the part of their own government was the actual conditions of the time. Under existing circumstances such a policy, they were persuaded, was unjustified and would prove disastrous to the state. Under other conditions they might have defended it as a national duty. The author of Daniel, for instance, manifestly justified and encouraged the Maccabean revolt, and Isaiah spoke of Assyria as the rod of Jehovah's anger and the staff of his indignation (10. 5). Jehovah used the Assyrian armies to punish wicked nations, and what he did in that day he may very well, in harmony with prophetic teaching, do to-day. He may use the armed forces of America in a mighty crusade against militaristic despotism. But this in the prophetic thought was all subordinate to the conviction that the time would come when war would be no more. The doctrine that war is a "biological

necessity" and that it will never cease is one that would have aroused the indignation of the prophets to the utmost limit.

True function of the nation.—War, according to the prophets, is at the best a necessity of these evil times and is destined to disappear. The true function of the nation lies elsewhere and, in the light of prophetic teaching, may be regarded as twofold: First, in so far as the nation is politically organized, it is its primary duty to promote justice and the spirit of humanity among those under its authority A government that permits injustice and cruelty—to say nothing about encouraging and being itself guilty of them—is by that very fact condemned. It matters not how innocently or naturally the evils may have grown up, it is the duty of the state to protect the weak against them. The government is not simply a referee, whose function it is to see to it that the rules of the game are observed by rich and poor alike regardless of the outcome of the struggle: it is the duty of the government to alter the rules, to equalize the conditions of the struggle, and to promote the spirit of coöperation. Failure to do this means inevitably the growth of injustice and inhumanity and the defeat of the very purpose of government. Yet such has often been the case in human history, and such was the state of affairs in Israel in the eighth century B. C. Only there

many of the judges and officials were in league with the strong and even violated the traditional rules in their interest. The result was that the seeds of discord and unrest were sown, and the very foundations of the state undermined. This the prophets clearly saw. To them the whole policy of the state was suicidal. "Do horses," asks Amos, "run up the steep cliff? Do men plow the sea with oxen? That ye have turned justice into gall, and the fruit of righteousness into wormwood" (6. 12). To him and the other prophets a government founded on might without regard to right was the height of folly. It ran counter to nature itself. Justice and humanity they viewed as the very atmosphere of every sound state. Without them a state would certainly be asphyxiated.

But no nation lives unto itself. It is part of a larger whole and toward this larger whole it may take one of two attitudes: It may seek to exploit it, use it for its own selfish purposes, or unselfishly to serve it. The latter is the prophetic idea and constitutes the nation's second function. It is expressed in an especially striking way in Deutero-Isaiah. Here we have the noble conception of the Suffering Servant (42. 1-4; 49. 1-6; 50. 4-9; 52. 13 to 53. 12). The servant is Israel, and Israel is represented as giving its life in vicarious and redemptive sacrifice for the world. Such a conception of the function of

the nation is hardly one that commends itself to the natural heart of man. The worldly-wise are still disposed to scorn it. But it is one that is appealing more and more to the forward-looking people of the world. On this point the ancient Hebrew prophets are still ahead of us.

In this idea that the nation should be a servant of other peoples it is implied that humanity as a whole is a greater good than any single nation. No nation is an end in itself. This truth the prophets clearly realized so far as political Israel was concerned. The nation in that sense they subordinated to their religion. And the result was that Israel is the only nation whose religion survived its own political downfall. In the case of every other people the religion fell with the nation. And this would certainly have occurred in Israel if it had not been for the fact that the prophets had already detached their religion from the state and stamped it as the greater good. But while the prophets thus subordinated the nation as a political organization to the greater and universal good represented by their religion they did not wholly succeed in doing so with the nation in the racial sense. At times they approached it. Israel was to be a servant nation, a light to the Gentiles. But the idea of the independent and ultimate worth of the Israelitic nation as such they did not transcend. To the end they

remained Jews, and this national limitation the transmitted to the later religious leaders of thei race. Even to-day it is the national bond that keep Judaism alive as a distinct religion. Some unifyin bond every religion must have, but a national bon manifestly unfits a religion to be universal. S Christianity finds its bond of union in a Perso When Jesus came the national limitations of th prophetic teaching were laid aside, and instead o the nation a divine Person was made the bond o religious union. What nationality is to Judaism that is Christ to Christianity.

Topics and Questions for Discussion

How do Chapters VI to X of this book differ i their method and general character from Chapte I to V?

Point out in detail how prophecy throughout i entire history was actuated by national considera tions.

In what respect did the nationalism of th prophets differ from that of the mere patriot?

Why did the prophets look upon the permane existence of the Hebrew nation as essential to th perpetuity of the true religion?

What distinction did the writing prophets mak between real and ideal Israel?

What was the difference between the preliterary and the literary prophets in their conception of "real" Israel?

Instead of the "fall" of man what did the prophets teach? (See Jer. 2. 2-8; Hos. 9. 10; Isa. 1. 26; Amos 5. 25).

How did the contrast between the real and the ideal made by the postexilic prophets differ from that made by the preëxilic prophets?

The attitude taken by the preliterary and the literary prophets toward the use of "force" as a means of realizing the ideal.

Why did not the prophets regard moral suasion or preaching as sufficient to bring in the new era?

How, according to the prophets, would the ideal kingdom eventually be established in the world?

The bearing of such passages as Isa. 2. 2-4; 10. 5; and 31. 3 on the prophetic attitude toward the necessity and permissibility of war.

What did the prophets regard as the primary duty of the state?

What important bearing does Isa. 42. 1-4; 49. 1-6; 50. 4-9; 52. 13 to 53. 12 have upon the question of a nation's duty to the world?

What enabled Israel's religion to survive the political downfall of the nation? (See the author's *The Beacon Lights of Prophecy,* page 204.)

Why did not the prophetic religion as represented

by Judaism become in the fullest sense of the term a universal religion?

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CHAPTER VII

PROPHECY AND MORALITY

In even the most primitive religions there is an ethical element. Magic is selfish: it says, "My will be done"; but religion in its essential nature is unselfish: it says, "Thy will be done." The religiously minded person submits himself to a power higher than himself—a power that represents a greater good than any individual interest of his own. He also regards himself as part of a larger social group, to whose laws he attributes an authority superior to any private wish. This is true of the religiously minded generally; and wherever we have such a submission of the selfish will to a higher social and divine will we have the ethical spirit. But it is easy for the religious attitude of submission to lose its ethical character. It may become purely formal. This is often the case. A person goes through the outward acts of devotion, but he puts no heart into them. They are simply a series of external rites and practices that have been taught him, or which frequent repetition has deprived of their original meaning. Or it may be that the outward rites are performed for selfish purposes. They are not genuine

expressions of submission to the divine will but, rather, attempts to bribe the Deity, to win his favor by gifts and an external appearance of devotion. Yet again, these rites may be positively immoral. Acts may come to be performed in the name of religion which would be condemned in the normal relations of life. Prostitution, for instance, often has been practiced in connection with religious sanctuaries, and human sacrifice has not been uncommon.

The popular religion in early Israel.—Such developments as these, it is evident, tend to destroy the ethical element in religion; and they have appeared to some extent in virtually every religion. We find them among the early Israelites. One need only read the preëxilic prophets to see how common they were at that time, and in the "preprophetic" period they were no doubt equally prevalent. The popular religion in Israel was half heathen until almost the time of the Exile. It was to a large extent external and formal in character. "This people," said Jehovah, "draw nigh . . . , with their mouth and with their lips do honor me, but have removed their heart far from me, and their fear of me is a commandment of men which hath been taught *them*" (Isa. 29. 13). They would attend to the external acts of worship, but would disobey the divine law so far as it conflicted with their selfish wills. The popular Israelitic faith was also for the most part a "nat-

ural" religion—that is, a religion that had for its aim the securing of the natural goods of life. It was "for grain and new wine" that they went to the sanctuaries. "I will go after my lovers," said Israel, "that give me my bread and my water, my wool and my flax, mine oil and my drink" (Hos. 2. 5). So long as their physical needs were met, they thought they were enjoying the divine favor, and their main purpose in seeking the divine favor was to assure for themselves material prosperity. Then, too, there were in the popular Hebrew religion such gross evils as prostitution and human sacrifice. The latter cannot have been common, but it is not infrequently referred to (Jer. 7. 31). Jephthah's daughter was evidently sacrificed (Judg. 11. 31, 39), and we read of Ahaz the king that he "made his son to pass through the fire" (2 Kings 16. 3). Prostitution in connection with the sanctuaries, however, seems to have been widely prevalent. Amos refers to it (2. 7), and Hosea manifestly regarded it as a crying evil (4. 13, 14).

But not only were the religious practices of the early Hebrews to a considerable extent nonmoral and even immoral: their view of God was also ethically imperfect. They thought of him as at times punishing people without an adequate motive (1 Sam. 6. 19; 2 Sam. 6. 6 f.), as at other times inciting to evil action (2 Sam. 24. 1; 1 Kings 12. 15;

1 Sam. 24. 19), and yet again as moved by such material gifts as the smell of the sweet fragrance of a sacrifice (Gen. 8. 21). They also thought of him as standing in such a relation to the Hebrew nation that he could hardly avoid treating them as favorites. He defended them against their enemies and protected them even when they were in the wrong (compare Gen. 12. 10-20; 20. 1-18). In a word, they regarded themselves as having virtually a monopoly of the divine favor.

Rites and ceremonies.—It was against such a background as that described in the two preceding paragraphs that the prophets did their work. And it was their supreme achievement, the one convincing evidence of their inspiration, that they completely moralized the popular religion. This they did in three different ways: first, by their denial of any intrinsic worth to rites and ceremonies; secondly, by their insistence on the idea that goodness is the essence of religion; and, thirdly, by their proclamation of the absolute righteousness of Jehovah and the certainty that he would soon appear in the world as its moral Judge. Each of these points is important and calls for elaboration.

It is one of the most striking characteristics of the literary prophets before the Exile that they never wearied of denouncing the popular trust in rites and ceremonies. Some of their most memorable utter-

ances deal with the subject. In Amos 5. 21-24 we have a famous passage beginning with the words: "I hate, I despise your feasts, and I will take no delight in your solemn assemblies." In Hosea 6. 6 is found the familiar saying, "I desire goodness, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt-offerings." In Isa. 1. 11-17 the subject receives its fullest and perhaps most striking exposition. "What unto me is the multitude of your sacrifices? saith Jehovah: I have had enough of the burnt-offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts." Thus this notable utterance begins; and it ends with the oft-quoted words "Cease to do evil; learn to do well; seek justice, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow." In Jer. 6. 20 we read: "To what purpose cometh there to me frankincense from Sheba, and the sweet cane from a far country? your burnt-offerings are not acceptable, nor your sacrifices pleasing unto me." But the greatest of all these passages is the one found in Mic. 6. 6-8, which, after indicating the worthlessness of all external sacrifices, even the sacrifice of one's own child, closes with the never-to-be-forgotten words "What doth Jehovah require of thee, but to do justly, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with thy God?"

It would, however, be a mistake to conclude from such utterances as these that the prophets rejected altogether the use of rites and ceremonies in wor-

ship. That they did not do so is evident from the fact that Isaiah classes prayer along with the other religious rites condemned. Prayer as such he, of course, could not have rejected; for prayer is the very heart of religion. What he meant to condemn was a merely formal or selfish prayer. So, likewise, it was not sacrifices as such that the prophets rejected but the unspiritual performance of them. Outward forms have their place in religion. Without them organized and efficient religion would vanish. In the abstract it is no doubt true that no particular rites or ceremonies are essential to true religion; that the only essential thing is the right inner spirit. Concrete experience, however, teaches us that there are many nonessential things in religion which are essential in order to make religion effective in the world. If we were to give up our churches, our established ministry, and the outward forms of worship, it is certain that the inner spirit of piety would itself rapidly vanish. The inner spirit cannot live without its proper outward expression. It is true, no doubt, that in the ideal we ought to make our whole life an expression of the spirit of worship, ought to turn every day into a holy day. And it would be nice, as a distinguished man once said, to wear our Sunday clothes every day; but if we did so, he added, we should soon be found wearing our everyday clothes Sunday. Life would lose its dis-

tinctly religious character if all special religious services and forms were given up.

This the great prophets of course realized. So what they condemned was not ceremonial worship itself but such worship when offered as a substitute for righteousness. Conditions might arise when it would be a matter of vital importance that the Temple and Temple service should be emphasized. This, as a matter of fact, was the case after the destruction of Jerusalem; and, hence, the exilic and post-exilic prophets—especially Ezekiel, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi—devoted no little attention, as we have already seen, to the externals of religion. They saw clearly that the priestly as well as the prophetic function was necessary in religion. Not only were forms and rites necessary as an expression of the religious spirit; they were also necessary because they were better understood by the average man than the general spiritual truths taught by the prophets by word of mouth. If the prophetic teaching at that early date was to be brought within reach of the people as a whole, it was necessary that it should be expressed not only in words but in rite and institution and ceremony. To do this was the work mainly of the priests; and the priestly law of the Old Testament is to be understood as in its essential nature an attempt to make the great ideas of the prophets intelligible to the rank and file of the people

by connecting them with the sacrifices and other rites with which all were familiar. As the prophets moralized the popular religion, so the priests popularized the prophetic religion. They made the feasts, the Sabbath, the rite of circumcision, and the other externals of religion symbolical expressions of the higher faith inculcated by the prophets.

But while the aim of the priests was thus a high and noble one, and while they were seconded in their work by some of the later prophets, it is still true that there is serious danger in unduly emphasizing the ceremonial element in religion. Time and again ecclesiastical institutions have fallen into formalism and lost their vital power because of this mistaken emphasis. Indeed, this false emphasis may be said to represent the natural, uncorrected tendency of the religious life of man. Ceremonialism is the great outstanding characteristic of the heathen religions as a whole and the chief source of their weakness. To point out, therefore, and to insist upon the worthlessness of religious rites in and of themselves, as did the preëxilic prophets, was a service of permanent value to true religion.

Goodness the essence of true religion.—More important, however, was the positive side of the prophetic teaching. And here we are first concerned with the principle that goodness is the essence of religion. This principle stood in direct

antithesis to the popular ceremonialism, and the prophetic condemnation of the latter was usually followed by an emphatic assertion of the former. Amos ends his famous denunciation of feasts and sacrifices with the words, "Let justice roll down as the waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream" (5. 24). And the corresponding passages in Isaiah (1. 11-17) and Micah (6. 6-8) conclude, as we have seen, in a similar way. The idea that righteousness is an essential element in religion goes back to the time of Moses and was dramatically reaffirmed by the prophets Nathan and Elijah as against David in the one case and Ahab in the other. But it was the eighth-century prophets who first elevated the idea into a position of exclusive significance. With them nothing mattered in the relation of Israel to Jehovah except righteousness; and by righteousness they meant all that is involved in the idea of moral goodness. They meant social justice, the fair and humane treatment of the poor by the rich, and, of course, the reverse of this also (Amos 2. 6-8; 5. 11, 12; Mic. 2. 1 f.; 3. 1-3). But they also meant something more: they meant absolute loyalty to Jehovah and complete submission to his will. They meant personal purity, freedom from idolatry, truthfulness, and everything that went to make up the moral ideal (Hos. 4. 1, 2; 8. 4-6; Isa. 5. 8-23; Jer. 9. 1-9). Sometimes religious people

speak disparagingly of "mere morality," but this is an unfortunate use of the word "morality." The fact is that morality or goodness, as understood by the prophets, is the most important thing in the world and is coextensive with religion. For Amos to "seek good and not evil" was equivalent to seeking Jehovah, and to seek Jehovah was to seek the good (5. 6, 14).

It is at this point that one is justified in speaking of the "radicalism" of the prophets. They were radical in the sense that they tested everything by the plummet line of righteousness. From the moral point of view they went to the root of things. That is what the word "radical" means. But their radicalism, it should be noted, was ethical, not economic. This distinction is an important one. There are to-day many economic radicals, and it may be that their radicalism is in some cases at least justified; but between their radicalism and that of the prophets there is no necessary connection. Indeed, many of the great leaders in modern radicalism have been diametrically opposed to prophetic radicalism. They have made morality a subordinate thing in human life and have taken an attitude of comparative indifference toward it. In this realm they have been radical only in the sense that they have sought to overthrow the moral standards of the past and to create a "new morality" subservient to their own

economic program. And in this regard they have parted company completely with the Hebrew prophets. The latter reaffirmed the fundamental principles of the traditional morality; and their influence was largely due to their power of appeal to the conscience of men. "Stand ye in the ways," said Jeremiah, "and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way; and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls" (6. 16).

Prophetism and socialism.—So prominent is the social problem at present that it may be well in this connection to consider a little more fully the relation of ancient prophetism to the modern social movement. In spite of what has just been said it is not uncommon to hear the Hebrew prophets spoken of as the "soap-box orators" of antiquity. Their true successors, we are told, are to be found among the socialistic agitators of to-day. And that there are important points of contact between the ancient prophetic and the modern socialistic movement is not to be denied. For one thing, we find in both the same sympathy with the oppressed classes of society, the same burning indignation against social wrongs. "What mean ye," cried Isaiah, "that ye crush my people, and grind the face of the poor?" (Isa. 3. 15). The ruling classes, said Micah in bitterness, "eat the flesh of my people, and flay their skin from off them, and break

their bones, and chop them in pieces, as for the pot, and as flesh within the caldron" (3. 3). And to Amos the maladministration of the day was so glaring as to seem utterly absurd—as absurd as it would be for horses to run up a steep cliff or for one to attempt to plow the sea with oxen (6. 12). No government, he held, could possibly be stable which was not based on justice and respect for the individual man as man. Now, no doubt the social evils due to tyranny and oppression were far greater in ancient Israel than with us; but that there are sore spots in *our* body politic no one would deny. In the mad rush for wealth human values are often overlooked, and men are treated simply as tools, as means to an end. And in principle this is essentially the same evil as that which confronted the prophets of old. When Amos denounced the rulers of his day for selling the righteous for silver and the needy for a pair of shoes (2. 6), what he had chiefly in mind was not the smallness of the price paid; to him it was an outrage that a human being should be sold for any price whatsoever. Personality he looked upon as sacred. It is this principle also that lies at the basis of such moral passion as is to be found in the socialistic movement.

Again, we find both in prophetism and socialism the vivid hope of a better social order. The existing order is not permanent. It will be overthrown; and

on its ruins will arise a new social state, in which the inequalities, injustices, want, and wretchedness of the present will have no place. This hope was the polar star of prophetic thought and it is also the inspiration of the present widespread social agitation.

But while there are these two important points of contact between the ancient prophets and the modern social radicals, there are two even more significant points of difference: one of these has to do with the method by which the new order is to be established. The present-day radical preaches class war. The proletariat is to be organized and then by force, if necessary, seize the reins of government. The movement is thus thoroughly political and worldly. In the canonical prophets, on the other hand, we find a very different spirit. We find there, as we have already seen, no resort to intrigue or force and no appeal to class hatred. The whole problem is lifted to a higher plane, and the solution is found purely and simply in the weapons of the Spirit, in the intervention of the God of righteousness.

The second point of difference has already been alluded to. It relates to the nature of the goal aimed at. What the modern radical stresses is the material, the economic. It is the outward comforts of life about which he is most concerned. In ethics

he is what is called a hedonist—one who puts pleasure above moral character. Indeed, the latter he regards as almost wholly dependent on external conditions. This is clearly expressed in the following crude lines found in an American Revolutionary pamphlet:

"I reckon that when the wardrobe is full,
And grub adorns the shelves,
That salvation will be plenty,
And souls will save themselves."

As opposed to this doctrine the prophets put the ethical first, and not second. The material goods of life they by no means despised. They valued them highly and even attributed to them a sacramental quality. They saw in them symbols of the divine favor, but they always made them secondary. The ethical with them was basic and primary. They believed that "the soul of improvement is the improvement of the soul." What they consequently chiefly stressed was not so much the need of a change in external conditions as the need of a change in the hearts of men.

The absolute righteousness of Jehovah.—The radicalism of the prophets was thus a matter of the spirit, of loyal devotion to the moral ideals of life. But it did not confine itself to their conception of

human duty; it extended also to their conception of Jehovah and his rule of the world. In the early popular religion of the Hebrews and also among heathen peoples there was a moral element in the views held of the Deity. But the Deity was not regarded as "ethical to the very core." This was an idea that first appeared with the literary prophets. It is to them that we owe the complete moralization of the idea of God. Amos, it will be remembered, virtually identified goodness with Jehovah. To him the two terms were synonymous. And Isaiah, in the famous *trisagion* (6. 3), makes holiness the very essence of Jehovah's being and sets his glory above the whole earth. Morality for the prophets was thus imbedded in the very heart of the universe.

But this at present was hidden from the common eye. Jehovah had not yet fully revealed his righteous rule. Soon, however, he would do so. This was the conviction of all the prophets. The day of Jehovah was at hand. Before long the eternal moral ideal would emerge in the visible and temporal order, all injustice and evil would be destroyed, and the kingdom of God would be established forever. Righteousness for the prophets was thus the certain goal of human history and, hence, would ultimately manifest itself to sight as well as faith as the one abiding good of life.

The importance of the moralization of religion.—

The importance of this aspect of the prophetic teaching can hardly be exaggerated. By thoroughly and radically moralizing religion the prophets rendered a service of incalculable value alike to religion and to humanity. First, they transformed religion into the mightiest agency for social progress ever introduced into the world. In its traditional forms religion has always sanctified worthless rites and harmful usages. In India, for instance, it led people to believe that poisonous serpents were sacred and might not be destroyed. The result was that hundreds of thousands of lives were needlessly sacrificed. It also placed its sanction upon the caste system, with all its abominations. In such ways as these religion has often been socially injurious; and still more frequently has it been socially useless. It has busied itself with rites and ceremonies that have stood in no relation to the real work of the world. But all this was changed by the prophets. They denied to mere rites and customs any religious sanction. True religion, they held, was purely ethical and had to do only with those fundamental virtues that lie at the basis of every healthy social organism. It is justice and kindness and faithfulness and honesty and purity that alone are sacred. And if so, it is evident that religion is the most powerful and beneficent social force in the world. For it is these basic social virtues that alone make true progress possible. Only as there

is a sincere and earnest devotion to the common good, can a better social order be introduced. And this devotion is a state of mind which only religion can permanently produce. It is moralized religion, and it only, which puts upon the basic social virtues the stamp of sanctity and so imparts to them a conquering power. The social hope of the world lies therefore in such a moral interpretation of religion and such a religious interpretation of morality as the prophets have given us.

In the second place, the prophets by moralizing religion and making it a socially useful institution established its essential rationality. Percival Lowell once remarked that "sense is not essential to religion, but incense is." To this the distinguished missionary, Dr. Gulick, replied that such a statement is "the essence of nonsense and is calculated to incense a man of sense." Religion, as we have learned it from the prophets, has no necessary connection with incense but it does appeal to sense, to reason; and it does so primarily because of its utility. Gibbon, the historian, used to say that all religions are "equally useful and equally false." But this position is one which present-day thought would hardly regard as self-consistent. Utility in the deepest sense of the term is a very important test of truth. If a religion is really useful, if it stimulates the conscience and kindles the noblest emotions, it can-

not be false. The moralization of religion guarantees its rationality.

In the third place, the prophets, by binding together religion and morality, made certain the permanence of religion. For religion when moralized can never become static and so be rendered obsolete. It inevitably progresses with conscience and will do so to the end of time. Whatever the enlightened conscience of mankind affirms, that true religion will sanction. Through the indefinite ages to come we may therefore rest assured that the moralized religion of the prophets will never be outgrown; it will forever keep pace with the progress of the human spirit, and thus forever carry within itself the authority of a divine revelation.

Topics and Questions for Discussion

In what regards is religion by its very nature ethical?

In what different ways may religion lose its ethical character?

In what respects was the popular religion in Israel before the Exile either nonmoral or immoral? Give the Scriptural evidence.

Show by Scriptural citations that the early Hebrew view of God was in various regards ethically imperfect.

What was the supreme achievement of the prophets, and in what three different ways did they bring it about?

What are the great prophetic passages that express rejection of the common trust in rites and ceremonies? (Commit them to memory.)

Show that the preëxilic prophets did not reject sacrifices and other rites as altogether superfluous or worthless.

What later prophets emphasized the external elements in worship, and what important service did they and the priests render to religion?

What evidence is there that Moses, Nathan, and Elijah made righteousness a vital factor in religion?

In what respect did the teaching of the eighth-century prophets concerning religion and morality mark an advance?

What in detail did the preëxilic prophets understand by "righteousness"?

How did the prophetic conception of the Deity differ from the heathen and early Hebrew conception?

In what sense were the prophets moral idealists?

How did the prophets transform religion into the most powerful agency for social progress in the world?

How did the prophetic teaching tend to establish the rationality of religion?

How does the prophetic standpoint insure the permanence of religion?

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CHAPTER VIII

PROPHECY AND PERSONAL RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE

TAKING the history of religion as a whole, we may distinguish two main stages or processes in the development of personal religious experience. The first consists in the gradual detachment of the individual from the social group to which he belongs, and the second consists in the gradual emancipation of the inner life of the individual from its dependence on external conditions. These processes did not follow each other chronologically; to some extent they went along together. But one was later in reaching its full development than the other, and in any case they are sufficiently distinct to be kept apart and treated separately.

The prophetic movement, as we have repeatedly pointed out, was predominantly national. The prophets addressed themselves to the Hebrew nation or race rather than to the individual Hebrew. It is this fact that perhaps at first most impresses the modern reader. We are so accustomed to having the religious appeal made to the individual that it seems strange to find the prophetic interest centering in

the nation. With us it is the individual who is the unit of value. He alone is immortal. Nations come and go, and the greatest of them will soon have passed away. No matter how important national distinctions may be at present they have no significance for the life to come. For us, therefore, the individual alone is sacred. But the attitude of the ancient prophets was almost the reverse of this. With them the nation was the unit of value. It was immortal. Individual Hebrews came and went, but Israel would abide forever. The one important thing, consequently, was the redemption of the nation.

The ancient idea of social solidarity.—In taking this position the prophets were not original; they simply reflected the feeling of their own day. In antiquity the sense of social solidarity was strong. The individual was subordinated to the family or clan or tribe or nation to which he belonged. It is so with all primitive peoples. We find it in ancient Israel. Innocent individuals were often punished because of the guilt of some relative. When Korah, Dathan, and Abiram were destroyed, "all that appertained to them" were swallowed up with them (Num. 16. 27 ff.), and the crime of Saul against the Gibeonites was visited upon seven of his grandsons (2 Sam. 21. 1-9). In a similar way it was believed that the whole nation suffered because of the sins of

such wicked kings as Ahaz and Manasseh (2 Chron. 28. 19; 2 Kings 21. 10-13). This was the common view. "The fathers," said the people, "have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge" (Jer. 31. 29; Ezek. 18. 2). On the other hand, the superior righteousness of an individual might be the source of unmerited favor to others. It might bring blessing upon one's own family, as in the case of Noah (Gen. 7. 1), Caleb (Deut. 1. 36) and Obed-edom (2 Sam. 6. 11 f.); or it might, as in the case of the patriarchs and David, be a ground of special divine help and mercy to the entire nation (Gen. 26. 4, 5, 24; Lev. 26. 42; 2 Kings 19. 34; 20. 6).

In addition to this general sense of social solidarity there was also in ancient Israel an intense spirit of nationality. Political ambition and religious and racial peculiarities all contributed to it. It was also fostered by the numerous wars in which the Hebrews were engaged. The result was that national problems necessarily came into the foreground. Before the Exile it was the independence and existence of the state about which the Israelites were chiefly concerned. Later it was restoration to power and world-wide influence about which they dreamed.

This, of course, does not mean that the problems of the individual were altogether overlooked. In the postexilic period they were dealt with at length

by the "wise men" and also by some of the psalmists. And at no time in Israel's history was the religious consciousness of the individual completely submerged in that of the nation or any smaller group. The individual always had his own private concerns, and these, as a rule, loomed largest in his thought. It was the affairs of the family—birth and marriage, sickness and death, personal success and misfortune —that usually claimed his keenest interest. And these were the things that he naturally made the most frequent subject of his prayers. It could not have been otherwise. But the way in which he at times suffered because of the sins of others and the way in which his own welfare was manifestly dependent on that of the tribe or nation left his own sense of personal responsibility and personal worth undeveloped. His own destiny, he realized, was not in his own hands, nor was it necessarily determined by his own conduct. His own family and the nation had more to do with it than he himself. If the nation was not saved, he could not be saved. Apart from it he could have no direct relation to Jehovah and no personal religious experience of his own. The nation, therefore, was logically and properly the chief object of his religious interest.

Such was the common feeling in preëxilic times and the prophets were naturally and necessarily influenced by it. With them the redemption of the

nation was the main concern. And their teaching on this point summed itself up in the announcement that the nation could not be saved until it was saved from its moral sins. When that was done, it would have a glorious future, transcending all the dreams of the past. But while this message probably satisfied the purified national feeling of the devout in Israel it left their personal problems unsolved. What was to become of them personally? Were they to be engulfed in the general ruin predicted by the prophets? The thoroughly ethical character of the prophetic teaching made this problem more insistent than ever. For ethics is personal: it recognizes the independent worth of the individual. Then, too, even before the time of Amos the Hebrew conscience had apparently developed to a point where it condemned the custom of slaying innocent children because of the crimes of their parents (2 Kings 14. 6). And if this was true of the common conscience, it is virtually certain that those trained by the prophets must have raised the question whether it was just that the righteous should perish with the wicked in the impending national doom.

Ezekiel's doctrine of individualism.—The eighth-century prophets themselves did not deal as directly with this question as we might have expected they would. Yet to a certain extent they did meet it. Isaiah, for instance, taught plainly and emphatically

the doctrine of the remnant, and the other prophets probably also held it. According to this doctrine, a remnant would be saved in the approaching judgment, but only a remnant. This remnant would be made up of the righteous—such as accepted the teaching of the prophets—and would become the nucleus of the Messianic kingdom. But the Messianic kingdom did not come; the righteous continued to suffer and die. Consequently, the feeling arose, especially among the exiles, that they were not being fairly treated; they were being punished for the sins of the fathers. And so long as this was the case they felt that there was no hope for them. It was to meet this mood that Ezekiel came forward with his great declaration of the individual's moral independence. The old idea of social solidarity, he asserted, is false. "All souls," said Jehovah, "are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sinneth, it shall die" (18. 4). No man is punished because of the sins of others. It is his own conduct, and that only, that determines his destiny. Every man's fate lies in his own hands. Each one decides for himself the question of life and death. "Cast away from you all your transgressions, wherein ye have transgressed; and make you a new heart . . . : for why will ye die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord Jeho-

vah: wherefore turn yourselves, and live." (18. 31 f.)

The idea that each man is the arbiter of his own destiny hardly fits in with the actual facts of life. It hardly can be denied that the innocent often suffer with the guilty, and that a man frequently becomes the slave of his own evil habits. But in the ideal it is evident that no one should be condemned because of what anyone else has done or has not done; his own conduct, and that only, should determine his treatment at the hands of God. And it is from this ideal point of view that Ezekiel's doctrine of individualism is to be understood. The prophet does not mean to say that at present every man is actually rewarded according to his deeds (see 21. 3), but that in his relation to God it is the personal and ethical element that alone is taken into account. As a moral being every person in the last analysis stands in his own right; his fate is not determined by the social group to which he happens to belong. The destruction of his relatives or neighbors does not necessarily mean his own destruction, and their redemption does not necessarily mean his redemption (Ezek. 14. 12-20). The individual himself is the unit of value and as such stands in a direct relation to God.

The ancient conception of sin, suffering, and salvation.—It is thus to Ezekiel that the distinction belongs of having first detached the individual from

his social environment and asserted for him complete religious independence; but in so doing he did not release the inner life of man from its dependence on external conditions. He declared that there was perfect harmony between inner worth and outward fortune. A man's degree of health and prosperity was a valid index to his character. And in the abstract this is no doubt what the moral law requires. The law of duty and the law of happiness should correspond; but in actual life they often do not. Ezekiel, however, did not himself clearly distinguish between the abstract and concrete points of view. The righteous, he said, would live, and the wicked die; but exactly what "life" and "death" meant, he did not say. People generally understood him as meaning physical life and death or, in broader terms, material prosperity and adversity. That in this external way righteousness was rewarded and wickedness punished had been the common belief for ages, and after the time of Ezekiel it tended to become a dogma. All suffering and misfortune were looked upon as evidences of sinfulness, while health and prosperity were regarded as indications of the divine favor. The inner religious experience of a man was thus dependent on outward conditions. If he was well and prosperous he enjoyed the divine presence: his sins were forgiven, and he was at peace with God. If, on the

other hand, he was in poor health and otherwise unfortunate, he felt that the Deity was estranged from him; and not until he had been restored to health and prosperity could he be assured of forgiveness and the divine approval.

This was the common belief in early Israel, as it was among ancient peoples generally. It was applied both to individuals and the nation as a whole. Any evil from which the people, either individually or collectively, suffered was supposed to be due to sin. The sin might be intentional or unintentional. It might be one's own or that of some relative. It might be ceremonial or distinctly ethical. But sin in some sense was generally regarded as at the root of every evil. And not only was this true of the special misfortunes that befell the nation or individuals in it: it held also for the great ills of the human race as a whole. In Gen. 2, 3 the pains of childbirth and the tyranny to which women in antiquity were subject at the hands of their husbands, the unresponsiveness of the soil, its useless and injurious products, the laborious toil of agricultural life, and even death itself are attributed to the primal sin of man.

But this profound and universal application of the ancient doctrine of sin and suffering seems not to have been widely current in early Israel, as there is no reference to it anywhere else in the Old Testa-

ment. If it had been, it would probably have given rise to a general feeling of pessimism, for at that time there was, according to the common belief, no such thing as salvation from sin without salvation from its penalty. If the penalty persisted, that was evidence of the persistence of the divine disfavor. Hence, in the presence of such permanent evils as those spoken of in Gen. 3, the early Israelites would have been without hope if they had regarded them as penalties for sin. But this they apparently did not; they seem as a whole to have contented themselves with applying the current view of sin and suffering only to the occasional and more special evils of life. To be saved in that early day, therefore, meant simply deliverance from these particular evils. It meant for the nation release from captivity in Egypt or Babylonia (Exod. 14. 30; Jer. 23. 6-8), victory over its enemies (1 Sam. 9. 16), and general prosperity (1 Sam. 10. 19; Psa. 118. 25); and, likewise, for the individual it meant escape from danger (2 Sam. 22. 3 f.), recovery from sickness (Isa. 38. 1 ff.), and enjoyment of the good things of life (Gen. 39. 3). The outward experience thus determined the inner religious feeling. The latter was only a reflection of the former.

This, however, does not mean that it was the things of sense and external success as such that the Hebrews most prized. What made material

prosperity so prominent a factor in their religious thought was the fact that they saw in it a symbol of the divine favor. The material goods of life had for them a sacramental quality. They brought God near to them. But while the common Jewish view of life was thus not sensual or worldly, it was seriously defective from the religious point of view. For one thing, it deprived the poor and unfortunate —those who needed it most—of the consolations of religion. Their very poverty, sickness, and misfortune carried with them the sense of estrangement from God. And this, in the next place, robbed faith of its conquering power. If the adversities of life were all a divine judgment for sins committed, one would by that very fact be left without courage to struggle against them. Then, in the third place, this view of suffering conflicts with the patent facts of life. As a rule, it is no doubt true that the way of the transgressor is hard, and that the wicked man in the end comes to grief. Society is so organized as to make this inevitable. But there are numerous exceptions to the rule: the righteous often suffer, while the wicked spread themselves as the green bay tree.

Jeremiah's example and its significance.—It was the last fact especially that eventually compelled a revision of the earlier theory of suffering. But the revision was slow in establishing itself in popular

thought. There was enough truth in the older view to keep it afloat long after it had been proved unseaworthy. Indeed, the Old Testament writers as a whole never discarded it. Such a late book as Proverbs reaffirms it time and again. But the profounder spirits from the time of Jeremiah on broke away from it. The eighth-century prophets had in a general way accepted it and applied it to the nation, and in this broader application Jeremiah also indorsed it. But he was not content to see the retributive hand of God only in the national history: he must see it also in the experiences of the individual, and especially in his own experiences. But here he found it by no means so easy to apply the principle of retributive righteousness. Indeed, he found it contradicted on every hand.

So far as the individual in general is concerned, Jeremiah merely raised the problem of the divine justice, asking why it is that the way of the wicked prospers, and then dismissed it (12. 1-6); but when it came to his own experiences, the problem was more persistent. He could not shake himself free from it. His sensitive nature compelled attention to it; and the more he reflected on it the more he became persuaded that his own experiences were a contradiction of the principle of the divine justice. God was not dealing fairly with him, and this tended to make him rebellious. He complained bitterly and

at times despairingly of his unjust sufferings (20. 7-18). God had enticed him, deceived him, into becoming a prophet. But such feelings as these, on the other hand, disturbed him. For he was by nature introspective—the psychologist among the prophets. He observed and reflected on his own mental states as well as on his objective experiences. And that he, a prophet, should have entertained such feelings of bitterness and despair seemed to him in his calmer moments altogether unfitting. There arose thus within him a conflict between the outer and the inner man. This conflict came to a head in chapter 15 (verses 18, 19). The prophet here in his pain and anguish cries out bitterly to God, "Wilt thou indeed be unto me as a deceitful *brook,* as waters that fail?" But as he does so, it dawns upon him that such words are equivalent to apostasy, and he hears Jehovah, in mild but impressive rebuke, saying to him: "If thou return, then will I bring thee again, that thou mayest stand before me; and if thou take forth the precious from the vile, thou shalt be as my mouth." There thus flashes upon the prophet's mind the thought that, after all, the greatest good of life is to be found in standing before God and having fellowship with him. Whatever painful outward experiences he may be subject to, they should be counted as nothing when compared with the privilege of knowing God and being

his messenger. His chief personal problem, therefore, became one of the inner life—how to keep his heart right before God. This, he realized, however, was beyond his own strength; so he cried: "Heal me, O Jehovah, and I shall be healed; save me, and I shall be saved" (17. 14). In this prayer we have the first instance in which the idea of salvation is applied to the inner life alone. Thus, out of Jeremiah's anguish and travail of spirit we see the birth of the "soul."

Henceforth, the inner life stands in its own right, and the supreme need of all who have turned away from God is that of a new heart. Ezekiel echoed the latter thought in his picture of the better future (11. 19; 36. 26), and one of the psalmists gave to it a classic expression: "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me" (51. 10). The center of gravity of the religious life thus moved from the outer to the inner world, and the paramount question in religious experience became one as to the state of the soul. But it was only very gradually that this emancipation of the inner life from its dependence on external conditions was effected in popular thought. "Two Hebrew writers of supreme intellectual and spiritual power" contributed in large measure to it. One was the author of Isa. 40-66. For him the suffering of the Servant was not due to his own sins; it was

vicarious and redemptive. It was endured because of and for the sake of the heathen world (chapter 53). The other was the author of Job. For him too the suffering of the righteous was an established fact. It might be a trial of faith, a test of one's disinterested righteousness; or it might have a disciplinary value. In any case it did not indicate the estrangement of God. "Though he slay me, yet will I wait for him." Such was Job's attitude. With him faith triumphed over the most untoward circumstances, and so it might be with all true believers. The soul's fellowship with God was thus liberated from its dependence on outward experience. It now stood by itself as the chief good of life. This is perhaps the profoundest thought in the Old Testament. It received its purest and most adequate expression in the seventy-third psalm, where we read, "Whom have I in heaven *but thee?* and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee" (verse 25); but it was the prophet Jeremiah who above everyone else was its creative source. He was the human agent through whom the divine Spirit first revealed the innermost truth and highest form of religious experience.

Topics and Questions for Discussion

What were the two main stages or processes in the development of religious individualism?

How did the prophetic attitude toward the nation and the individual differ from ours?

Show by Scriptural citations how the idea of social solidarity prevailed in ancient Israel.

What made the sense of nationality so strong among the Hebrews?

How did the private religious interests of the ancient Hebrew come to be subordinated to those of the nation? (See the author's *The Beacon Lights of Prophecy,* page 68.)

Why did the preëxilic prophet's message to the nation fail to satisfy the personal needs of the devout Hebrew?

Isaiah's doctrine of the remnant, and its inadequacy. (See Isa. 7. 3; 8. 16-18; 10. 20 ff.)

What attitude did Ezekiel take toward the old doctrine of social solidarity, and why?

Does Ezekiel's doctrine of individualism (chapter 18) square with the facts of life? If not, how is it to be understood?

What, according to the common ancient view, did adversity and prosperity indicate with reference to one's relation to God?

What did the early Hebrews understand by "salvation"?

Point out the religious defects of the view that suffering is always due to sin.

What do we learn from Jer. 12. 1-6; 20. 7-18;

15. 18, 19 concerning Jeremiah's view of the relation of suffering to sin and to religious experience?

What special significance attaches to Jer. 17. 14?

What great truth concerning personal religious experience do we owe to Jeremiah, and in what psalm did it receive its purest expression?

How did Deutero-Isaiah and Job reënforce and develop the teaching of Jeremiah concerning the relation of adversity to religious experience?

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CHAPTER IX

PROPHECY AND THE WORLD

THE prophetic movement was national in a two-fold sense: first, in the sense that it had to do with the Israelitic nation as a whole rather than with individual Israelites; and, secondly, in the sense that it was concerned with a particular nation rather than with the world as a whole. The nationalism of the prophets is thus to be distinguished from individualism, on the one hand, and universalism, on the other. As against the latter it represents particularism, and as against the former socialism. There was, however, no direct antithesis between prophetic nationalism and either individualism or universalism. The nationalism of the prophets was traditional. It simply reflected the undeveloped sentiment and thought of the day. It did not grow out of the conviction that the socialistic standpoint, implied in nationalism, is superior to the individualistic. It carried with it no polemic against individualism. Rather did the prophetic teaching, as we have seen, promote the recognition of the independence of the individual and of his inner life. Jeremiah and Ezekiel made notable contributions to individualism.

Indeed, they may be regarded as its creators. Instead, then, of prophecy's being opposed to individualism, the reverse was the case. Individualism was the product of the prophetic movement. Perhaps we may call it a by-product. But if so, the by-product expressed the true genius of the movement better than the traditional nationalism reflected in it. Religious individualism, although not directly aimed at by the prophets and although running in a different channel from their work as a whole, was still one of their main achievements.

The same is to be said of religious universalism. It too may be regarded as a by-product of the prophetic movement. The prophets themselves were on the whole concerned only with their own people, with the redemption of Israel. In that sense they were particularists. But they did not champion the cause of particularism as over against that of universalism; their particularism was simply the traditional shell out of which they were half consciously growing. They did not directly aim at the conversion of the heathen: they did not, for instance, carry on missionary work among them. Nevertheless, the whole prophetic movement pointed in the direction of a world religion. Universalism was the logical outcome of prophecy, its ripe fruitage, quite as much so as was individualism. Indeed, universalism and individualism logically go together. If every indi-

vidual stands in a direct relation to God, it is evident that it makes no difference to what nation one belongs. All men are children of the Most High, and the only true religion is a universal religion. This conclusion was not logically deduced by the prophets, but they worked more or less consciously toward it. The purpose of the present chapter is to point out the steps in this development.

The early Israelitic attitude toward the outside world.—It was only gradually that the Hebrews came to full national self-consciousness. At first they did not sharply differentiate themselves from other peoples. They looked upon Jehovah, it is true, as a jealous Deity. He would brook no rival in Israel. But he was not thought of as aggressive. He did not aim at world domination or even domination of the neighboring peoples. Each people, it was thought, had its own god or gods, and each god was to be worshiped by his own people. In this regard Jehovah stood on the same plane as the other deities. He was God of Israel only in the same sense as Chemosh was god of Moab (Judg. 11. 24). When a man was driven into another land, it was equivalent to saying to him, "Go, serve other gods" (1 Sam. 26. 19). The Israelites naturally regarded Jehovah as more powerful than other deities. He had created the world and was equal to any legitimate claim that they might make upon him. But

he was not the only deity. There were other gods, and these gods had a right to be worshiped by their own people. There was thus no distinctively religious antipathy between early Israel and the outside world. At any rate, there was none due to the aggressiveness of the Hebrews.

Some resentment may have been awakened among the neighboring peoples by the jealousy with which the purity of Jehovah worship was guarded. The prophets, for instance, looked with strong disfavor upon the worship of heathen deities in Israelitic territory under any circumstances, even when practiced by the foreign wives of the kings. And when Jezebel, the wife of Ahab, introduced into Israel the worship of the Tyrian Baal and apparently promoted it, Elijah went so far as to deny that Baal was a deity at all. Jehovah, he insisted, alone was God. This attitude, in so far as it became known among the neighboring peoples, probably gave rise to more or less of ill will. But, in general, there was very little, if any, purely religious hostility between early Israel and her neighbors.

There were, however, strong national and political antipathies between them, and these to some extent took on a religious cast. Israel had been at war so frequently with her neighbors—with the Philistines, the Edomites, the Moabites, the Ammonites, and the Syrians—that it was inevitable that

there should be bitter enmity between them. And since Jehovah was the national God of the Hebrews, *their* enemies became *his* enemies (1 Sam. 30. 26). He had therefore no interest in these peoples except to destroy them. His beneficent interest was confined to the Israelites. He cared for them but for no others. And the incomparable greatness attributed to him by the prophets only increased their national pride and self-confidence. It made them feel that the only real Deity there was, was on their side. They were certain, consequently, of ultimate triumph over their enemies. There would, they thought, be a great day of Jehovah, in which all hostile powers of the world would be overthrown, and the Israelitic kingdom established forever in independence and security.

The heathen world in the thought of the preëxilic prophets.—Such was the common attitude toward the outside world which confronted the preëxilic prophets. One factor in it they all accepted. That was the unique position of Israel. "You only," we read in Amos, "have I known of all the families of the earth" (3. 2); and in Hosea, Jehovah says, "When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt" (11. 1). "Israel," says Jeremiah, "*was* holiness unto Jehovah, the first-fruits of his increase" (2. 3). This was the conviction of all the prophets. They all believed that

Israel was the chosen of Jehovah. Indeed, this belief underlies every characteristic expression of Hebrew thought. It was a basic assumption of all the inspired writers. But in other respects the prophetic conception of Israel and the heathen world diverged sharply from the popular view.

First, the prophets asserted the universal providence of God. The Israelites had no monopoly of the divine favor. Special manifestations of Jehovah's good will had no doubt been made to them. One fact they were particularly fond of referring to was the deliverance from Egypt. But, said Jehovah, "Have not I brought up Israel out of the land of Egypt, and the Philistines from Caphtor, and the Syrians from Kir?" (Amos 9. 7). The marvelous deliverance from Egypt has its parallel in the history of other peoples. God cares for them also. In this respect "are ye not as the children of the Ethiopians unto me, O children of Israel? saith Jehovah" (Amos 9. 7). The election of Israel, whatever else it might mean, did not mean the possession by Israel of any selfish privilege.

Secondly, the prophets declared that there was one law for all men, and *that* the moral law. Ethics is no respecter of persons. It knows no races and no nations. The obligations it imposes are universal, and the punishment it threatens is equally universal. Doom would come upon Israel's enemies, as the

people expected and desired (Amos 1. 2 to 2. 3); but it would come upon them not simply because they were hostile to Israel but because of their violation of the moral law. And for the same reason doom would also fall upon Israel (Amos 2. 6-16). Her favored position would not exempt her. Indeed, it made her doom all the more certain. "You only have I known of all the families of the earth: therefore will I visit upon you all your iniquities" (Amos 3. 2). The "therefore" in this verse has been said to be the most significant "therefore" in all literature. To many of the Hebrews it must have come as a distinct shock. They had been accustomed to deduce from the fact of their election the assurance that Jehovah would protect them despite their sins, but here the prophet draws from it the very reverse conclusion. "Your election," he says, "means simply increased opportunity, and increased opportunity means increased responsibility, and increased responsibility means increased guilt in the case of wrongdoing, and increased guilt means increased certainty of punishment." The logic is irrefragable. It has its bearing also upon the prophet's conception of the heathen. They had less light than the Hebrews and would be judged accordingly. Jehovah, if anything, would deal less severely with them than with his own people. He consequently did not hesitate to use them in disciplining Israel. He made Assyria

the rod of his anger and the staff of his indignation (Isa. 10. 5) and he raised up the Chaldeans to punish the wicked in Judah (Hab. 1. 6 ff.).

In the third place, some at least of the preëxilic prophets looked forward to the time when all peoples would worship Jehovah. This did not form a part of their regular preaching. The conditions of the time did not call for or even admit of that. With the nation struggling for its very existence no time or strength was left for missionary activity. But such an outlook into the future was nevertheless the logical consequence of the prophetic teaching. If the whole world was full of Jehovah's glory, as Isaiah said (6. 3), it was inevitable that some of the prophets would now and then look forward to the time when this fact would be generally recognized. We have in Isaiah, consequently, that great passage, already referred to in another connection, in which Jerusalem is represented as the religious center of the world (2. 2-4). The Temple hill is to be exalted above all other mountains, and the nations of the world are to flow thither to receive instruction and guidance from Jehovah. Jeremiah likewise, a century later, represented the heathen as coming unto Jehovah from the ends of the earth and saying: "Our fathers have inherited nought but lies, *even* vanity and things wherein there is no profit. Shall a man make unto himself gods, which yet are

no gods?" (16. 19-20). In Ezekiel there is also a passage (16. 53-63) which seems to look forward to the conversion and redemption of the heathen, the heathen in this case being symbolized by "Sodom." But such passages as these were wholly incidental to the main teaching of the preexilic prophets. The ultimate fate of the heathen world had no fixed place in their thought.

The universalism of Deutero-Isaiah and other postexilic prophets.—It was the Exile that first forced the prophets to reflect on the religious meaning of heathendom and led them to seek to determine its place in the divine plan. Their own starting point was still Israel. It was the destiny of their own chosen people with which they were primarily concerned. But the Jews now stood face to face with the heathen world, as they had not done before. It now confronted them not simply as a hostile political power but as a great religious fact. On every hand they saw its institutions. They were surrounded by its pervasive influence. Its imposing civilization awed them; and no doubt many a Jew yielded to its enticements and renounced his ancestral faith. The new situation thus created a problem, which the religious leaders of the nation could not neglect. If they were to keep their people true to the faith of the fathers, they must explain in a satisfactory way to them the fact of heathenism.

They must make clear to them their own relation to the heathen world and must give them a strong persuasion of the certainty of the triumph of their own faith.

The latter aim could be attained only by inculcating the belief in the sole Godhead of Jehovah. And this Deutero-Isaiah did with persuasive eloquence. Time and again he says as the mouthpiece of Jehovah: "I am Jehovah, and there is none else; besides me there is no God . . . Before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me. I, even I, am Jehovah; and besides me there is no saviour. I am God, and there is none else . . . I am the first, and I am the last; and besides me there is no God" (45. 5; 43. 10, 11; 45. 22; 44. 6). "Who," he asks, "hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and meted out heaven with the span" (40. 12)? The question needs no answer. It is Jehovah "that maketh all things; that stretcheth forth the heavens alone; that spreadeth abroad the earth" (44. 24). He is "the everlasting God," "the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity" (57. 15). The Hebrew exiles, therefore, have nothing to fear from the heathen idols (44. 6-20). These idols are only the work of men's hands; and the proud civilization that has been built up about them is an empty shell.

This conception of Jehovah and the heathen gods

would seem necessarily to carry with it the conclusion that Jehovah ought to be worshiped by all the peoples of the earth, and that it was Israel's duty to make him known to the heathen. In other words, monotheism would seem to imply universalism as its corollary. But monotheism was held by the eighth-century prophets, and they evidently did not draw the universalistic conclusion so far as it related to Israel's missionary duty to the outside world. This was also true of many of the exilic and postexilic Jews. Some seem to have contented themselves with the view that heathenism was a part of the original divine plan, and that nothing more, therefore, need be done about it. In Deut. 4. 19, for instance, we are told that Jehovah "allotted" the heathen peoples the heavenly bodies as objects of worship; and in Deut. 32. 8, where we should read "sons of God" instead of "children of Israel," the idea is apparently expressed that Jehovah appointed "the sons of God" or subordinate deities to rule over the heathen nations. Heathenism was thus a divinely established fact, which the Jews were under no obligation to seek to alter.

Others of a more earnest and radical nature, however, could not take so indulgent a view of the heathen world. They could see in the heathen nations only the enemies of God. It was these nations who constituted the chief obstacle to the estab-

lishment of the Messianic kingdom. In the impending judgment, therefore, they would all be destroyed (Obad. 15 f.; Joel 3. 2 f.). That was the only sense in which they entered into the divine plan. An Eastern Christian, who had just said that God did not love the Turks, was asked why he then made so many of them, and the answer came back quick and sharp, "To fill up hell." Such was also the attitude of many postexilic Jews toward the heathen of their day. And it is not to be denied that in this attitude there was much of moral earnestness. It was not simply a narrow nationalism or a revengeful spirit that found expression in it. Many postexilic Jews were profoundly convinced that the heathen world was the embodiment of evil, and that its destruction was the only thing consistent with the purpose of a righteous Deity. The imprecatory psalms, for instance, are to be understood from this point of view.

But whatever excuse or justification of this hostile attitude toward the heathen world may be given, it stood in striking contrast to the spirit and teaching of Deutero-Isaiah and several of the other postexilic prophets. As the eighth-century prophets *moralized* religion, and as Jeremiah and Ezekiel a century later *individualized* religion, so Deutero-Isaiah, a little more than half a century later still, *universalized* religion. He, as has been previously

said, was the prophet of universalism. It was he who initiated the program of a world religion. It was he who first drew from the monotheistic doctrine the practical conclusion that it was Israel's mission to be "a light to the Gentiles" and to bring to them the knowledge of the true God. The whole history of Israel he interpreted from this point of view. Even her sufferings he regarded as part of the divine method of winning the heathen world. He represents, for instance, the heathen as saying of Israel, the Suffering Servant: "He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed" (Isa. 53. 5). Israel's national death was a martyrdom which would eventually bring about the redemption of the heathen world. Toward that end everything in the divine plan converged. Such was Deutero-Isaiah's philosophy of history—a wonderful conception, one that may well have stirred the heart of the most ardent Hebrew to its profoundest depth and satisfied his highest aspirations. Denied a place in the sun in the political realm, the nation was here accorded an opportunity to achieve something yet greater—to make its own religion the world religion. No loftier goal was ever set before a people.

But the Israelites were slow and reluctant in their response—so much so that the author of the book

of Jonah felt called upon to rebuke them. How beautifully and impressively he did this was pointed out in a previous chapter. The heathen, he believed, stood ready to heed the call to repentance, and the arms of the Infinite were outstretched in tender welcome to them. In the book of Malachi there is a verse (I. 11) which expresses an even more generous attitude toward the heathen. It is here said that Jehovah is already worshiped throughout the Gentile world. In every place where incense is offered to a Supreme Being it is really offered to Jehovah. His name is therefore even now "great among the Gentiles." But this verse stands alone in the Old Testament (compare Acts 10. 35). The universalism that is expressed elsewhere is a hope or prediction rather than a present fact: it is an event that is to be realized in the great day of Jehovah. Perhaps the most remarkable expression of this universalistic hope in all the Old Testament is that found in the latter part of the nineteenth chapter of Isaiah—a passage written by some unknown prophet of the postexilic period. Here not even first place is accorded Israel in the final state of redemption. "In that day," we read, "shall Israel be the *third* with Egypt and with Assyria, a blessing in the midst of the earth; for that Jehovah of hosts hath blessed them, saying, Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel mine

inheritance" (verses 24, 25). Thus through the faith and insight of Israel's inspired seers the way was prepared for that time when it would be possible to say that "there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all" (Colossians 3. 11).

Topics and Questions for Discussion

What was the relation of prophetic nationalism to individualism?

The relation of prophetic nationalism to universalism.

What is the logical relation of individualism and universalism to each other?

What do we learn from Judg. 11. 24 and 1 Sam. 26. 19 concerning the early Israelitic conception of other gods and Jehovah's relation to them?

What was the attitude of the early Israelites to their neighbors, and how did this affect their conception of Jehovah's relation to the outside world?

In what respect did the preëxilic prophets agree with the popular view of Jehovah's relation to Israel?

What significant truth does Amos 9. 7 teach?

The importance of Amos 3. 2 and its bearing on the prophet's conception of the heathen.

What was the general attitude of the preëxilic

prophets to the heathen world, and what is the significance of Isa. 2. 2-4; Jer. 16. 19, 20; and Ezek. 16. 53-63?

What new religious problem did the Exile create for the Israelites?

Why did Deutero-Isaiah lay so much stress on the sole Godhead of Jehovah? (Read Isa. 40-55 and mark the passages in which this idea is expressed.)

The logical relation of monotheism to universalism.

What three different attitudes did the monotheistic Jews take toward the heathen world?

How are Deut. 4. 19 and 32. 8, on the one hand, and the imprecatory psalms, on the other, to be understood?

What very significant achievement is to be ascribed to the eighth-century prophets, to Jeremiah and Ezekiel, and to Deutero-Isaiah respectively?

What according to Isaiah was the mission of Israel, and how was she to fulfill it?

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CHAPTER X

PROPHECY AND THE FUTURE

It was pointed out in the first chapter that prophecy is not identical with prediction. The prophets were primarily preachers. This conclusion has been confirmed by our entire study. We have seen how, throughout the whole of Israel's history, the prophets were always concerned with the needs of their own day. In one case it might be the need of armed resistance to the enemy, as in the times of Deborah, of Samuel, and of the Maccabees. In another instance it might be the need of quiet trust in God and submission, if necessary, to the enemy, as in the time of Isaiah and of Jeremiah. At one time it was rebuke that was most needed, at another time encouragement. Under certain circumstances it was the worthlessness of ceremonialism that needed to be emphasized; under other circumstances it was the importance of the Temple and the Temple service. To these variations in the conditions and needs of the people the prophets adapted themselves. Whatever their own times demanded, that demand they sought to meet. And what distinguished them from their contemporaries was not so

much their superior insight into the future as their superior insight into the needs of the present. They had themselves no interest whatsoever in being known simply as clairvoyants—as men possessed of the mystic power of peering into the future. Indeed, such a conception of their mission would have been altogether repugnant to the great prophets. They were profoundly serious men, and as such what primarily interested them was the grim realities of the present. The future in so far as it was unrelated to the pressing needs of their own day was to them a mere matter of idle curiosity. Soothsayers might busy themselves with it, but they, as earnest men, could not. What they were alone concerned with was to induce their contemporaries to do the thing that at that time most needed to be done. And this, it may be added, is the characteristic of the true prophet of every age.

But while all this is true and of fundamental importance, it would be a mistake to suppose that the prophets had no interest in the future. All people have some interest in it, and what gives to the present its seriousness and sanctity is its significance for the future. No earnest man is indifferent to the things that are to be; and the more earnest he is, the greater his interest in them is likely to be. As unusually serious-minded men, therefore, the prophets would naturally deal more or less with the

future. But they had a more special interest in it than that. It was their particular function to reveal the hidden will of God, and this necessarily involved to some extent a disclosure of the future course of events. "Surely," says Amos, "the Lord Jehovah will do nothing, except he reveal his secret unto his servants the prophets" (3. 7). More so, consequently, than "wise men" or priests, the prophets had it as their task to interpret the divine will in so far as it had to do with the future. This was a constituent and distinctive element in their mission. They lived under the constant pressure of impending events.

Specific predictions.—Occasionally the canonical or literary prophets made specific predictions. Jeremiah, for instance, predicted the seventy-years captivity (25. 11; 29. 10). He predicted the death of the false prophet Hananiah within a year (28. 16). He also predicted that the Egyptians would not save Jerusalem from capture at the hands of the Chaldeans (37. 6-10). Isaiah, likewise, predicted that the kings of Syria and Ephraim would not succeed in capturing Jerusalem (7. 3-9). He predicted that these two northern kingdoms would before long be overrun by the Assyrians (8. 3, 4). And at a critical juncture in Judah's history be confidently declared in the face of the most general contrary expectation that Sennacherib would never again lay siege to the

capital city. All these predictions were fulfilled, and their fulfillment no doubt made a considerable impression upon the public mind. But the impression was only temporary. No permanent contribution to the religious thought or faith of the people was thus made. Predictions similar to those just mentioned have not infrequently been made and fulfilled in the course of the world's history. A few years ago at about Christmas time the city of Messina was destroyed by an earthquake. Four or five months before the catastrophe one of those wandering religious fanatics whom the Italians call "Nazarenes" appeared in the city and, gathering groups of people about him at the busiest street corners, addressed them in these words: "Be warned, take heed and repent, ye men of Messina! This year shall not end before your city is utterly destroyed." The fulfillment of this and similar predictions, however, had no special religious significance. And so it was with the specific predictions of the prophets except in so far as they were related to their positive teaching.

It should also be noted that these predictions, although made in unconditional terms, were usually understood to be conditional in character. Micah, for instance, predicted in unqualified terms the destruction of Jerusalem (3. 12); but in the book of Jeremiah, written a century later, we read that

Hezekiah repented, and hence the city was spared (26. 17-19). Ezekiel's prediction that Tyre would be captured by Nebuchadrezzar was also not fulfilled (29. 17-20). And in the story of Jonah it is related that the prophet announced unconditionally the destruction of Nineveh, but the people repented, and hence the city was saved (3. 4, 10). In view of such facts as these one of the greatest of the early church fathers, Jerome, declared that the prophetic predictions were not made that they should be fulfilled but that they should not be fulfilled. That is, they were in the nature of warnings. Their fulfillment or nonfulfillment was consequently not a matter of special importance and does not seriously affect the authority of the prophets.

The day of Jehovah and the Messianic hope.—The important thing in the teaching of the prophets relative to the future was not their specific predictions but their general conception of what the future course of events would be. And to understand the prophets at this point we need to recall the ancient belief in a series of world cycles. This was a widespread belief. We find it in all the great nations with whom the ancient Hebrews came into contact. According to this belief, there was a world year, or cycle, embracing thousands of our years—twelve thousand, according to the Persians. During this cycle the world passed through a period of develop-

ment and decline, coming at the end of the period into a condition similar to that with which it began. The same process was then repeated, and so on through the endless ages. There was no progress, no permanent development, but simply a ceaseless repetition of the past; so that one contemplating the series as a whole would naturally say: "That which hath been is that which shall be; and that which hath been done is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun" (Eccl. 1. 9).

With this belief the Hebrews probably came into contact early in their history. But they never accepted it; they reacted against it. For one thing, it came into conflict with their native optimism. It gave them no hopeful outlook. The future was simply to repeat the past; and this view naturally led to discouragement and despair. Then, too, the belief in a series of world cycles was out of harmony with such a thoroughgoing belief in the personality of God as that held by the Hebrews. A *person* cannot be content to do the same thing over and over again without achieving some end. He must have a goal toward which he can work. A Deity who is a real Person and not a mechanism cannot therefore be thought of as creating one world cycle after another through the endless æons of time; he must have an objective, a goal to be attained. So the Hebrews substituted for the common ancient belief in a series

of world cycles the great belief in a day of Jehovah. According to this belief the present world cycle would come to an end, as the heathen believed. But when it came to an end, the old process would not be repeated; instead there would be established a new and eternal world order, over all of which Jehovah would directly rule. This in some respects was the most characteristic element in Hebrew thought.

When the belief in the day of Jehovah originated we do not know. It was current in the time of Amos (5. 18-20) and may have arisen several centuries earlier. At first it was no doubt a rather vague belief, involving perhaps more or less of the mythological. In so far as it was current among the poor and oppressed it awakened the hope that existing evils would before long be righted. But it especially stimulated among the people national feeling. It led them to expect that in some marvelous way Jehovah would eventually intervene on their behalf, overwhelm their enemies, and make them the dominant race in the world.

This popular belief formed the background of the prophetic conception of the future. The prophets did not reject the idea of a "day of Jehovah"; they accepted it. But they moralized it and made it more definite. The earlier popular belief probably included the idea of a personal Messiah. The day of Jehovah was to be inaugurated by him. There is

an early reference to such a belief in Gen. 49. 10-12. But the literary prophets made it much more prominent. Hence, their conception of the future is commonly spoken of as "the Messianic hope." This does not mean that they all believed in the coming of a personal Messiah, or that they regarded such a leader as essential to the establishment of the new kingdom; in many prophetic pictures of the better future Jehovah alone appears as King. But in others the personal Messiah is so prominent that his name has come to be applied to the kingdom as well as the King. The term "Messianic" thus has both a broader and a narrower meaning. In the broader sense it designates the new age without any necessary reference to the Messianic King; and in this sense the Messianic hope is simply a continuation of the earlier belief in the day of Jehovah, a spiritualization and development of it. The same may also be said of the later as compared with the earlier belief in a personal Messiah. It represents a more highly developed and more completely moralized form of the belief.

The judgment.—In the Messianic hope we may distinguish four different elements: the idea of a *judgment,* of a *new age,* of the *redemption of Israel,* and of a *personal Messiah.* Of these the second and third are so closely related to each other that it will be best to consider them together. The idea of a

judgment is one that we have frequently referred to. It was the outstanding theme of the preëxilic literary prophets. Before their time it had its place in the popular belief; but the judgment then expected was one upon foreign nations rather than upon Israel. The enemies of Israel were to be destroyed, but Israel herself would escape. To her the day of Jehovah would be a day of light, and not of darkness. The early "preprophetic" belief in a divine judgment was thus strongly nationalistic. It contained no distinctly ethical element. It was at the best nonmoral and at times, no doubt, immoral. But all this was changed by the literary prophets. They did not deny that doom would fall upon the hostile heathen nations; they reasserted it. But it would fall, they insisted, with equal and even greater certainty upon Israel herself. The judgment, as they conceived it, was to be thoroughly moral. It was not to be the work of a partisan national Deity but of the impartial Judge of all peoples. At any rate, this was the prophetic ideal. That some of the literary prophets, such as Nahum, Obadiah, and Joel, were influenced in their conception of the coming judgment by national or racial feeling can hardly be denied. Indeed, most of the postexilic prophets were inclined to take a more indulgent attitude toward the sins of Israel than toward those of other nations.

Exactly how the judgment was to be carried out is not perfectly clear. Much is said about foreign invasion and exile. But many other forms of judgment are also spoken of. There is earthquake and pestilence and famine and drought (Amos. 2. 13 ff.; 6. 9, 10; 4. 6 ff.; 8. 13). Almost every known form of public calamity is mentioned. Hosea summons death and Sheol to pour out their plagues (13. 14). And the tendency, especially from the time of Zephaniah on, was to paint the picture of the day of wrath in darker and darker colors. It was to be a day of vague and unheard of terrors and of indescribable gloom. This tendency was a prominent characteristic of the apocalyptic type of thought.

The new age and redemption of Israel.—The judgment of the world, according to the prophets, would be followed by the redemption of Israel and the new age. As virtually nothing is said of the new age independently of a redeemed Israel, these two ideas really go together. In the "preprophetic" period the coming judgment, as we have seen, was regarded as virtually equivalent to the triumph of Israel over her enemies. Her redemption at that time, therefore, meant simply freedom from such hardship and oppression as she was then subject to; and the new age meant a period of such abundant prosperity as the national triumph and the divine favor would naturally guarantee. Later the idea

most prominent in the popular conception of Israel's redemption was that of deliverance from exile. But in general her redemption meant simply release from such evil conditions as she at any particular time happened to be living under; and the new age meant an ideal state of affairs, especially from the economic and political points of view.

This popular expectation of a glorious future of unexampled prosperity for Israel the prophets did not reject. They reaffirmed it. But they added as conditions of its realization ethical requirements that were new. Present Israel, they held, could hope for no such future. It was morally unprepared for it. Before it could be ready, it must pass through the purging fires of judgment (Isa. 1. 21-26). The dross must be consumed, and the nation left a morally purified people. They will then be a mere remnant of what they now are, but they will be a people redeemed in heart as well as in their outward condition. So much stress was laid by the prophets on this ethical factor in redemption that under their influence redemption came to be thought of as primarily a moral or spiritual matter. It came to mean redemption from sin rather than from misery. The moral element in life thus came to be accorded the primacy. It came to be regarded as the chief good in the Messianic age. The new kingdom was to be first of all a kingdom of righteousness. Those who

dwell therein "shall be all righteous," regenerate in life, imbued with the divine spirit, and with the law of God written upon their hearts (Isa. 60. 21; Ezek. 36. 25-27; Jer. 31. 31-34).

There is one instance in which the redeemed remnant is represented as "an afflicted and poor people," trusting only in the name of Jehovah (Zeph. 3. 12). But the general prophetic representation of Israel's future is the popular one above described. There is to be universal peace under the leadership of Israel (Isa. 60. 10-14; 2. 2-4). Even the strife between man and beast is to cease (Hos. 2. 18; Isa. 11. 6, 8). The soil is to become supernaturally productive (Amos 9. 13), and the new Jerusalem is to be a city of dazzling beauty (Isa. 54. 11, 12). Such pictures of the future as these may at first give the impression that the prophets took a rather materialistic view of human life, that they stressed unduly its outward conditions. But in this connection it is important to bear in mind, what has already been pointed out, that the richness and beauty of the external world had more than an economic and sensuous significance to the devout Hebrew. They had for him a sacramental character and symbolized to him the divine Presence. The glories of the new age made the world to him a sanctuary, so that he could only say, "Jehovah is there" (Ezek. 48. 35). And that this spiritual interpretation of material

prosperity was uppermost in the minds of the prophets is evident not only from their general ethical standpoint but from specific statements here and there. The external world in their thought was quite secondary. It had no intrinsic worth and at times is represented as destined eventually to disappear (Isa. 60. 19; 51. 6).

The personal Messiah.—The idea of a personal Messiah was more prominent, as we have already stated, in prophetic than in "preprophetic" thought; but it was not so prominent in prophetic teaching as in later Christian belief. Christians make the Messiah the essential condition of the realization of the Messianic kingdom. His is the only name given among men whereby we may be saved. But in the prophetic teaching concerning redemption there is often no reference to the Messiah; Jehovah is represented as the sole agent in bringing in the new era. There are, however, several important passages that are Messianic in the narrow sense of the term; and in these we find three different conceptions of the Messiah or the personal agent through whom the kingdom of God is to be established on earth. The first and most common represents him as *an ideal king* (Isa. 9. 2-7; 11. 1-5; 32. 1-8; Mic. 5. 2-6; Jer. 23. 5, 6; Ezek. 37. 24-28; Hag. 2. 20-23; Zech. 3. 8-10; 6. 9-15). As such he was usually thought of as of Davidic descent. But the important thing in con-

nection with him was the absolute righteousness of his character and rule. He even bears the name "Jehovah our righteousness," by which it is meant that he is not only righteous himself but makes his people righteous (Jer. 23. 6).

The second and highest conception of the Messiah is that of the *Suffering Servant* (Isa. 52. 13 to 53. 12). Here Israel is idealized and transformed into a Messianic figure. The important thing in this representation is not the future glory of the Servant but his present suffering. This suffering is vicarious and redemptive, endured for the sake of the world as a whole. No passage in all the Old Testament impressed Jesus more profoundly than this one. The third prophetic conception of the Messiah, it is evident, also appealed strongly to him. It is that of the *Son of Man,* or "one like unto a son of man" (Dan. 7. 13 f.). This Being is to come with the clouds of heaven; and universal and everlasting dominion is to be given him. In the thought of the prophet or apocalyptist he was apparently identified with the "glorified and ideal people of Israel" (7. 18, 22, 27), but later he came to be thought of as an individual. And the striking and most original thing in Jesus' conception of his own mission and destiny is that he combined in it the idea of the Son of Man with that of the Suffering Servant.

The destiny of the individual.—In our study thus

far of the prophetic outlook into the future we have said nothing about the ultimate destiny of the individual. This was a subject to which the prophets devoted surprisingly little attention. But it was a subject that in the course of time they could not wholly avoid. However glorious Israel's future might be, it could not permanently satisfy the needs of the individual. To meet these needs it was at first stated that there would be a miraculous prolongation of human life in the new age (Isa. 65. 20-22); and when this proved insufficient, it was declared that death itself would there be abolished (Isa. 25. 8). But even so the individual was not satisfied; for many faithful souls would pass away before the coming of the Messianic kingdom. Hence, we are told in two notable passages that there is to be a resurrection of the dead (Isa. 26. 19; Dan. 12. 2). The faithful who have been taken away will be raised up to share in the glories of the new day.

The resurrection here referred to, however, was not to be a universal one. It did not apply to the righteous everywhere; it embraced at the most only Israelites and perhaps only special classes of them. The stamp of incompleteness thus rests upon this aspect of the teaching of the prophets. And this also may be said to be the case with their teaching as a whole. Wonderful and incomparable as it is, revealing everywhere the guiding hand of the divine

Spirit, it still did not succeed in wholly extricating itself from its particularistic and nationalistic entanglements; it remained in spite of itself bound to this earth and to a particular people. Before it could become a religion for all peoples, a religion for both time and eternity, it needed the quickening touch of One greater than a prophet. It needed to be incarnated in a supreme Person who could say of himself, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life." Despite all the greatness of the Old Testament prophets it was Jesus who "brought life and immortality to light."

Topics and Questions for Discussion

Show by specific illustrations how the prophets addressed themselves to the needs of their own day and adjusted their message to the circumstances of their own time.

The prophet's relation to the future as distinguished from the soothsayer, on the one hand, and the "wise man" and priest, on the other.

Explain the early and widespread belief in a series of world cycles. Show why the Hebrews reacted against this belief.

How did the Hebrew belief in a day of Jehovah differ from the heathen belief in a series of world cycles?

When did the belief in the day of Jehovah arise,

and what was its relation to the "Messianic hope" of the prophets?

Indicate the four different elements in the Messianic hope.

How did the prophetic conception of the coming judgment differ from the earlier popular view, and under what form did the prophets think of the judgment as coming?

Show how the prophets moralized the popular conception of Israel's redemption.

How does Zeph. 3. 12 differ from other prophetic pictures of the future? (Look up passages illustrative of the common prophetic view.)

Why did the prophets lay so much stress upon the material prosperity and external glory of the new age? Were they materialistic?

How did the place of the Messiah in prophetic thought differ from his place in "preprophetic" and Christian thought?

What are the chief passages describing the Messiah as an ideal king, and what are the points emphasized in these descriptions?

Under what two significant forms is the Messiah depicted in Isa. 53 and in Dan. 7. 13 ff.?

Why did the prophets devote so little attention to the destiny of the individual?

What special interest attaches to Isa. 65. 20-22; 25. 8; 26. 19; Dan. 12. 2?

In what respects was the prophetic teaching incomplete?

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